CRITICAL STUDIES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

A Collection of Essays

David D. Anderson

Bureau of Composition, Compilation and Translation
UNIVERSITY OF KARACHI
PAKISTAN

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PAKISTAN

FIRST EDITION
1964

PRINTED IN PAKISTAN
AT
The Inter Services Press Ltd., Karachi-4

To My Colleagues and Students in
The Department of English
University of Karachi
1963-1964

PREFACE

Most of the essays in this collection had their inception in lectures delivered to my B.A. Honors and M.A. Final students at the University of Karachi and at public gatherings in Pakistan during the academic year 1963-1964. The ultimate purpose of presenting them in this permanent form is to make them available to those among Pakistani students and the public who have shown an ever-increasing interest in American literature. In publishing them I hope that they will make some contribution, however modest, to furthering that interest and to bringing Pakistan and the United States closer to mutual understanding and appreciation of their great cultural traditions.

Organized in a generally chronological manner, the essays in this collection are of two types: those that focus on major literary trends and movements, using prominent authors as a basis for discussion, and those that examine in detail individual authors and works. I have attempted to strike a balance between those authors already studied by Pakistani students and those that I feel should be better known and appreciated here. The result will, I hope, contribute to the present American literature program in Pakistani universities and suggest further areas of exploration for those who are interested.

For the many kinds of aid that led to the publication of this volume I owe many thanks: to the Fulbright-Hays program for making possible this year at the University of Karachi; to Mrs. Maya Jamil and her capable, inspiring staff of the Department of English for making the year worthwhile and enjoyable; to Major Aftab Hasan, Director, Bureau of Composition, Compilation and Translation, University of Karachi, and Mr. Russell L. Harris, Cultural Attache, United States Embassy, for making the publication possible; and to my wife Patricia, as always. for her critical comments and expert typing.

David D. Anderson

Karachi, Pakistan
January 31, 1964

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CHAPTER I

THE LITERATURE OF THE EARLY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

A national literature can be described as the expression of the common ideals, beliefs, and characteristics of a time, a place, and a people, an expression that both makes articulate, and contributes to the development of, a national identity. Perhaps at no time in a nation's history is a national literature more important than in the country's formative years, when a unique cultural complex is coming into being. For the United States the simultaneous emergence of a national identity and an embryo national literature took place in the closing years of the eighteenth century and the opening years of the nineteenth, a time of crisis, of change, and of progress in man's cultural, social, and political history.

These years, between 1783 and 1810, were those that saw the United States begin to take form and assume an identity as an independent republic and as a people. During this early national period the literary output of the country was not belletristic, either in scope or in purpose. There was not yet a profession of letters in America during those years, and the temper of the period, a time of consolidating a wide variety of often conflicting social,

political, and religious impulses, was essentially utilitarian and pragmatic in nature, as was most of the writing. Consequently, the earliest literature in North America that can be called American rather than colonial is writing that not only reflects the intellectual fluctuations of the country's formative years, but, most importantly, tries to sort out and clarify these intellectual impulses in such a way that they would combine to produce a literary tradition that, its advocates insisted, would be uniquely American.

Of the impulses that are evident in the American literature of the time, four obvious elements are most important, both because the ideas upon which they were based played an important part in shaping the American ideal during those formative years and because they provide clear evidence of a slowly emerging belletristic consciousness. These impulses—they are for the most part neither clearly defined nor articulated enough to be called themes—are nationalism, rationalism, neo-classicism, and romanticism. Together they illustrate the intellectual nature of a period that saw the development of a national identity and the growth of a national literary tradition.

Much of the literature of the period was, of course, strongly influenced by and modeled upon contemporary British works in poetry, the novel, the drama, and the essay. Consequently, the decline of neo-classic formalism, the rationalistic currents from Europe, and the rise of romanticism are as clearly evident in American works of the time as they are in British. However, the transition to romanticism in America was intensified, altered, and naturalized by a conscious search for native American materials, settings, incidents, and characters. Much of this search was the result of a growth in nationalistic feeling that demanded an American national literature ano culture that rejected the English origins of both. As a result, national feeling actually fostered the growth of romanticism at the same time that the growth of romanticism contributed to the rapidly emerging national identity. Concurrently, just as the rationalistic emphasis of the Enlightenment provided the rationale of the American Revolution and the American concept of government, it provided much of the intel-

lectual substance of the American writing of the period.

In order to understand the nature of the literature of this earliest national period, it is perhaps best that we examine it in terms of these four major impulses—nationalism, rationalism, neo-classicism, and romanticism—in order to see how each made its own contribution to specific works of the time and how all of them collectively became an intrinsic part of an emerging American literary consciousness and tradition.

In turning first to the impulse of nationalism it is well to note that the idea of an American national identity emerged slowly but definitely during the immediate pre-Revolutionary years, the years of the Revolution itself, and the years in which the government took form. Ranging from a vague awareness of an incipient difference between the Englishman and the American to obvious chauvinism, from the formulation of a satisfactory and expressively national government to a demand for a uniquely American tradition of *belles lettres*, the nationalistic impulse is an entirely natural outgrowth of the severed political, economic, and emotional ties with the mother country and the need for political and cultural institutions that would support the new country in its separate course. Such a change, as the literature of the times shows, found its expression both rationally and emotion ally.

Because political issues and questions occupied the best minds of the new country to a great extent, much of the writing is both pragmatic and political in nature, a characteristic that is particularly evident in the years before, during, and following the Revolution itself as nationalism and political issues became synonymous in American writing and thinking. Almost ten years before the Revolution John Dickinson, in his *Letters From An American Farmer*, published in 1767-1768, provided one of the earliest tangible views of an American identity different from that of the English. Although a moderate who fell far short of proclaiming revolution, Dickinson contributed to the growth of that sense of identity among the colonists which manifested itself in the establishment of the new nation. Throughout his letters Dickinson refers to "us" and "we," in opposition to the acts of the British government,

thereby attributing to the colonists a unity that did not exist in fact at the time. In letter XII, he says, "Let us consider ourselves as *men—freemen—Christian freemen*—separate from the rest of the world, and firmly bound together by the same rights, interests, and dangers." Although he rejected outright severance of ties with Britain, Dickinson nevertheless proclaimed that America is a country, that Americans are different from Englishmen by virtue of their geographic environment, and that these facts must be recognized, not only by British authority, but by the American themselves.

During the actual fighting of the Revolution, a national identity was forged slowly by the authors of an increasing array of political papers. Thomas Paine, in the *Crisis* series, demanded national unity of purpose, as did Thomas Jefferson in *The Declaration of Independence*. Both of them refer to "our country" and "our countrymen," implying in doing so that the American national character had already been established in fact. In both cases, however, and especially in Paine's *Common Sense*, the implication that the nation was a unit was extremely valuable, not only in achieving the immediate end of political independence, but in aiding the citizens of the colonies to think of themselves as Americans rather than colonists or Virginians or New Englanders or transplanted Englishmen. In this respect, the emphasis on a cohesive unit working together to achieve specific ends contributed much to the development of the concept of nationalism as it was expressed in American writing.

After the war of the revolution was fought and won, and the colonies were in fact free and independent, the political writing of the period continued to illustrate and foster the concept of a national awareness. Immediately following the end of hostilities George Washington in his *Circular to the States* appealed strongly to this consciousness of nationality by emphasizing the unique situation in which Americans found themselves and reiterating the fact that the American nation should take its rightful place among the nations of the world. Furthermore, he advocated the establishment of a strong federal government as one of "the Pillars on which

the glorious Fabrick of our Independency and National Character must be supported . . ."

The Articles of Confederation, the first document that was designed to instill some semblance of unity among the states, and the *Constitution of the United States*, which succeeded it, were both essentially nationalistic in nature, although behind them was an internal argument concerning the actual form that the government was to take and the rights that would be delegated to the national government, the states, and the people. In these documents it is sufficient for our purposes to recognize the fact that both of them provide evidence that the citizens of the former colonies realized that they were of one nation, that they had certain similarities in beliefs and in social and economic institutions that contributed to the concept of one nation and one national character transcending state, regional, and institutional boundaries.

The foremost political writers of the period following the Revolution fell into two camps, the Federalist group, which had James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, as outstanding spokesmen, and the Anti-Federalist group, represented by Thomas Jefferson and Philip Freneau. In spite of pronounced doctrinal differences, both contributed to the concept of American national identity. In their essays both groups were primarily interested in the form that the new government was to take, and their writings represent opposite sides in the political debate over the proper emphasis in government. But all of these writers were concerned with the future of the United States as a whole, recognizing that it was one rather than many. Neither side considered any other possibility, and each concerned itself with the rights and privileges of Americans in relationship to each other.

In general, the political writing of the period encouraged, fostered, and finally recognized that the United States was in fact a unit, composed of various factions, it is true, but nevertheless possessed of characteristics which mark the citizen as an American, as a member of a society which had a common heritage, a common language, and common problems and interests. The concept of nationalism became established in the minds and lives of the

people, and the political writings of the period reflect as well as reinforce that fact.

Pragmatic writing other than political also reflects this growth of national consciousness. In the essays and letters of Dr. Benjamin Rush, the nationalistic concept is evident in his statements concerning the proper form of education in the new nation, a form that would be democratic, nationalistic, and especially suited to American conditions. Although his suggested mode of education would hardly be considered suitable or democratic today, nevertheless, Dr. Rush advocated education that would fit the students for their roles as free men in a new, open society. In fields other than education, too, the preoccupation with things American is evident. In *A Brief Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century*, Samuel Miller points out with provincial but justifiable pride the achievements in art, literature, publications, and literary and philosophic societies newly established in America. While in all of these fields, British achievements far surpassed American, nevertheless Miller asserts that these advances were American in character and hence indicative of a progressive and progressing young nation.

In the *belles-lettre* of the period, the nationalistic impulse is often more obvious than in the pragmatic writings. Although in its infancy, nevertheless, American literature in general began to show evidences of the fact that an entire continent full of material was available to the writer and was being used to an increasing degree. Poetry, the novel, and the drama of the period were modeled on British forms, but American characters, settings, and themes were used with an accelerating frequency. Consequently, Americans began to recognize themselves, their towns, their countryside with its flora, its fauna, even its Indians.

In using American materials, the writers of the period were at the same time striving for the establishment of what could be considered a truly American literary tradition as Noah Webster, James Kirke Paulding, and William Ellery Channing demanded. At the same time, conditions in the new nation were also combining to foster the cultivation of a new tradition. The growth of

cities and their attendant cultural advantages, and the establishment of libraries, periodicals, and printing presses as well as the growth of American national consciousness were factors that tended to encourage American creative writing.

In drama, the trend to nationalism was especially obvious. The play *Andre*, by William Dunlap, appeared in 1798 in a climate conducive to the establishment of a theatrical tradition after the decline of Calvinism and the conclusion of the Revolution. With a Revolutionary background and atmosphere, this play was essentially nationalistic in character. Based on the episode which culminated in Benedict Arnold's treason, it uses the period just before Major Andre's execution as an opportunity to display the traits that Dunlap considered essentially noble in Americans. Although not anti-British in tone, the play does laud Washington, America, and Americans; at the same time it condemns the tyranny that forces men to fight.

The Contrast (1789), by Royall Tyler, is another example of drama that deals with American problems in America. Although modeled on Richard Sheridan's work, the play has an authentic American flavor. Intensely nationalistic, it satirizes foreign affectations and conceit while eulogizing the sterling qualities found in true Americans. It was this play that contributed the enduring stereotype of the naive but noble American bumpkin to the stage.

In the novel, too, nationalism shows itself early in American literary history. Although the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), is set in America, the author, William Hill Brown, did not consciously attempt to write a truly American novel, as did his successors. But his more prominent and skilful contemporary, Charles Brockden Brown, was the first to attempt to write in what he felt was a new national literary tradition. Although he did not quite succeed in doing so in *Wieland* (1798) or in *Ormond* (1799), he did use American materials with success. His technique and treatment remained essentially British, but his characters were Americans and the settings were identifiably American. In using them, he contributed a great deal to the ideas that America was a fertile source of material and that Americans

would support a profession of letters.

Hugh Henry Brackenridge, in *Modern Chivalry* (1792-1815), took up the theme of Americans and American problems in America with more success than any of his predecessors. *Modern Chivalry* owes much to *Don Quixote* and the picaresque tradition, but it nevertheless achieves an authentic American flavor in its satirical portrayal of the contemporary American scene. Brackenridge was often critical of the excesses of America and Americans, but, most importantly, he rejected chauvinism in his demand for a necessary balance in portrayals of America both on its frontier and in its centers of culture. The material, the theme, and the people of *Modern Chivalry* emerge as recognizably American, and Brackenridge came nearer to producing an American novel than any of his contemporaries.

In poetry, Philip Freneau combined his ardent patriotism with his minor but true poetic talent in producing authentic American verse. Using patriotic themes and native scenes, he wrote verse that was not only good poetry for the time and place, but that demonstrated graphically that American poetry could be written. In "Eutaw Springs" (1781), he eulogized the heroes of the Revolution in a moving, enduring manner; in "To a Wild Honeysuckle" (1786) he provided an excellent romantic lyric which uses a typically American focal point; in "The Indian Burying Ground" (1788) his subject matter is entirely and undisputably American. Nationalism in Philip Freneau's work marks his contribution to the inception of American poetry as the neo-classic tradition went into decline and romanticism began to emerge.

Among the Connecticut Wits, Timothy Dwight and Joel Barlow used American subject matter and ideas in an effort to achieve a national literature. Dwight's "Greenfield Hill" (1794) praises America, its achievements, and its leaders; Joel Barlow's "The Columbiad" (1807) eulogizes America and the American ideal, and his "The Hasty Pudding" (1793) celebrates that American tradition, cornmeal mush. John Trumbull, another member of the Wits, contributed, among other things, "McFingal," (1775-1782), an attack on the Tories who did not understand or appre-

ciate America.

The literature of early America, in general, shows itself to have been intensely nationalistic in spirit and in subject matter, although the forms and the techniques remained essentially British. The American writers of the period had a goal—an intrinsically national literary tradition—that they never quite achieved, but their failure to accomplish that purpose is not to their discredit. In their attempt they reflected the spirit of their times in a vivid and sometimes embarrassingly lucid manner. In all types of writing in the period the concept of nationalism, the belief that America and Americans are unique and identifiable, is found, and the total effect of the writing is a picture of a people striving for self-identity and for identification with something better than they had known before.

Just as it is evident that the American writers of the formative years were preoccupied with the concept of nationalism in their work, it is equally evident that to a great extent their thinking was dominated by the rationalism of the eighteenth century Enlightenment of which they were a part. The spokesmen of the early American republic may rightfully be called the children of the Enlightenment and their age the Age of reason because of the unique faith that many of them had in the powers of the human mind to advance the race to a point approaching perfection in all the areas—political, social, economic, cultural, theological—with which the human mind concerns itself. The concept of the rational approach to human problems and institutions is found in the writings of many of the same men who probed the matters of American identity and of governmental structure, as they probed, too, the proper relationship of man to his God. They found their answers or thought they would find appropriate answers to these problems through a rational, analytical approach. Briefly, the world-view held by these men was a firm belief in the essentially rational and orderly nature of the universe and an equally firm belief that the order of the universe could be reduced to a set of immutable laws through the application of reason and the scientific method. Then, they believed, these natural laws could be applied

to the complex of institutions that man has constructed in his attempts to progress through the ages. Coupled with these basic beliefs was the conviction that man had progressed and would continue to do so as he discovered and interpreted the laws of nature and applied them to the construction of a perfect society.

This faith in the rational nature of the universe and in the ultimate perfectability of man's institutions and hence of man himself is reflected in their attitudes toward government, theology, education, nature, and man himself. In the literature of the period the rationalistic attitude is especially obvious in the essays, poems, letters, and books that find their inspiration in attempts to bring man further upon the long road toward his ultimate perfection.

In the political writing of the years during and following the Revolution the influence of rationalism is especially obvious, not only in the search for a rational political framework, but especially and more importantly, in attempts to define the nature of the proper relationship between man and his government. Influenced especially in their political thinking by John Locke's *Treatise on Civil Government*, Thomas Hobbes's social contract theory in *The Leviathan*, Jeremy Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, and Rousseau's *Social Contract*, the American political theorists of the period based their positions on the application of rational analysis to government and to the relationship between government and governed. Included in this rational approach to government was the theory of the natural right of man to life, liberty, and property, a paradoxical assertion that, while natural rights cannot be proved to exist through the application of reason, these rights do, in fact, exist because they must; therefore, they were said to be self-evident.

Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791-1792) contains one of the most fervent and outspoken examples of the rational approach to the problems of government and governed. In *The Rights of Man*, Paine turns his probing reason on the existence of government in society in an effort to determine the reason for its being. In true rationalistic style, he states "All the great laws of society are laws of nature . . . But how often is the natural propensity to

society disturbed or destroyed by the operations of government!" From here, he analyzes the origins of the governments of his time, both old and new, rejecting the old monarchies and absolutisms in favor of the new republic as the best form for the protection of the rights of the people from whom, he maintains, government derives the only authority it has.

In no other political documents of the time is the impact of rationalism more evident than in the three that gave form and existence to the American republic. *The Declaration of Independence* is the first document to illustrate the impact of the rationalism of the age upon political theory. In framing the *Declaration*, Thomas Jefferson drew heavily upon the rational concepts of the rights of man, the rational relationship between government and governed, the theory of the social contract, and an analysis of the deteriorating relationships between Britain and the Colonies which led to the declaration. *The Articles of Confederation*, the first attempt to design machinery to govern the new state was, in effect, an attempt to limit the powers of government to essential functions; it was constructed in a manner conducive to full expression of the rights of the individual and of man in general. The governing document that replaced it, the Constitution itself, was, in its careful arrangement of checks and balances, an attempt to emulate nature and the operation of natural laws in governmental structure, and the appended Bill of Rights contains a reiteration of the basic rights of man which the rationalists held to be self-evident.

The political writings of the debates over the ratification of the Constitution show that this rational approach to government was foremost in the minds of both the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists. Each faction, in stating its position, saw its prefered form of government in terms of a rational, orderly society firmly rooted in the natural law. The emphasis upon a government with sufficient authority to circumvent the attempts of any faction to usurp power and infringe on the rights of others is one of the most potent arguments in *The Federalist Papers*. In this respect, the analogy to the perfect balance in nature becomes evident. On the other hand, the Anti-Federalist faction employed the tenets of rationalism in

advocating retention of a loose federation of sovereign states. Philip Freneau, the primary voice of Anti-Feoeralism, shows this approach in his *Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects.* In the legislation passed by the new federal government after the adoption of the Constitution, Freneau saw a piecemeal attack on the rights and liberties of man. The Alien and Sedition Law, the standing army, and tax and debt legislation were all manifestations of "slavery rattling her chains and sharpening all her instruments of torture . . .". For Freneau, the rightful balance of nature had been upset.

Fisher Ames and Dr. Benjamin Rush were others who appealed to reason to establish an orderly nation based on the laws of nature. Democracy, for Ames, was chaos; a republic was the only logical means whereby government would be orderly and stable. John Adams, too, saw government in this light, a point of view that was anathema to Jefferson and his anti-Federalists.

In general, the political theorists who were most concerned with the establishment of the new government were also concerned with a government based on rationalistic principles. The acceptance of the premises of rationalism provided the men who framed the government of the United States with the incentive to construct a governmental structure which would function efficiently and yet at the same time, insofar as was possible, protect and extend the natural rights of the people.

As men turned their attention to the problem of man's proper relationship to his God, their theological analyses, too, came under the influence of rationalism. Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* (1794-1796) is the most perfect and eloquent demonstration of the religious beliefs of the rationalists, a group of loosely-defined tenets termed deism. After stating his belief in fundamental religious tenets—the existence of one God, the hope for a hereafter, and the good works essential to the expression of these beliefs—Paine stops there, rejecting the doctrines and dogmas of organized religion because they cannot pass the critical analysis to which he subjects them. Revelation, prophecy, miracles, the Bible, even the divinity of Christ himself, are rejected as a result of this intellec-

tual probing. The existence of God can be established by examining his handwork in nature, Paine maintained; beyond that, he asserted that religious dogmas are mere suppositions and superstitions unsupported and unsupportable by the evidence in nature, the true book of revelation given to men by God.

In *The Age of Reason* Paine states in no uncertain terms that "my mind is my own church", reiterating a basic article of the religious faith of the rationalists. Although God was accepted as the great engineer of the universe and he was believed in by the rationalistic deists, they found no analogy in the workings of nature for organized churches or for any of the dogmas or doctrines which churches propagated. Since reason could not accept these articles of faith, they were rejected. In his work Paine proceeds to examine the articles of conventional faiths, rejecting them because of the "irreconcilable differences between the real work of God existing in the universe and that which is called *the word of God*, as shown to us in a printed book that any man might make ... Mystery and Miracle ... are incompatible with true religion", the religion revealed to us in nature.

Just as rationalism provides much substance in these pragmatic writings, in the belletristic literature of the period there is also evidence of rationalistic attitudes. In *Wieland*, Charles Brockden Brown portrays a surgeon uncle to Wieland as a rationalist-sceptic who refuses to believe anything not verifiable by reason. When even he is convinced of the mysterious nature of Wieland's father's death, the tone of supernatural horror is intensified, but Brown points out that only rationalism can enable man to survive. Brown's position is clearly an ambiguous concession to Gothicism, but his rationalistic bias in belletristic writing is surpassed only by Philip Freneau. In Freneau's earlier non-political poetry there is further evidence of the widespread influence of rationalism. Two poems are especially significant in pointing this out. "On the Universality and other attributes of the God of Nature" is a vivid and forthright expression of the rationalist's approach to religion. God is "nature's God"; his system is "fixed on general laws"; everything in nature is good because "He all things into

being loved." This theme is developed further in "On the Religion of Nature", which expresses the rationalist attitude succinctly:

This deals not curses on mankind,
Or dooms them to perpetual grief,
If from its aid no joys they find,
It damns them not for unbelief;
Upon a more exalted plan
Creatress nature dealt with man—

Rationalism, as a philosophy of life extending into man's relations with his physical environment, his fellow men, his government, and his God, was a widespread and important characteristic of the late Eighteenth Century in America. The rationalists, as thoroughly imbued with a respect for the power and logic of God as they were with the concept of an American national identity, provided much of the impetus toward the erection of a government of both laws and men, toward the materialization of an ideal, and toward the expression of a new, unique national experience.

The domination of these two concepts, nationalism and rationalism, in the literature of the early American republic is evidence that American writers of those years were primarily interested in writing for a purpose and a cause, an interest that is neither as ignoble nor as unimportant as all too many twentieth-century literary historians would have us believe. But in spite of the predominant pragmatism of the literature of the time, the embronic development of a belletristic tradition is equally evident, first of all in the reflection of the predominant English literary fashion of ineo-classicism, and then, as Americans looked about themselves in response to the currents of nationalism and romanticism, in an obvious effort to create a new, uniquely American literary movement.

Neo-classicism, characterized by satire, restraint, taste, and decorum in both verse and the essay, and the rigid use of the couplet in verse, may be seen in a great deal of American writing in the period. Actually, too, the neo-classic techniques, with their emphasis on satire, were particularly well adapted to the prevailing pragmatic emphasis of early American writing.

In prose, the politics of the period provided subject matter for vivid, forceful political essays, their techniques strongly influenced by Addison, Steele, Goldsmith, and Swift. *The Federalist Papers*, ostensibly by "Publius," are in this tradition, as are the writings of "Cato," Governor Clinton of New York, and a torrent of lesser works that poured from the presses. Philip Freneau, too, employed satire in prose, much in the manner of Swift, in his *Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects*. In creating Robert Slender, O.S.M., to ask naive questions and make simple, ironic comments on the nature of the proposed federal government, Freneau made substantial contribution to political writing in the neo-classic tradition. Fisher Ames, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, unable or unwilling to be satirists, were also essayists, who showed strong neo-classical influence in argument as well as in restraint.

Poetry of the period contains many neo-classical traits. Satiric poetry in the manner of Pope and Dryden was especially popular. Not only was such poetry traditional before the demand for a new American literature was felt, but, more importantly, the struggles between Britain and the colonies, the Federalists and Anti-Federalists, various social classes and religions, and the development of fads and stereotypes all provided opportunity for satiric comment.

Among the Connecticut Wits, John Trumbull provides an example of satire modeled upon "Hudibras" in "The Progress of Dullness", (1772-1773), a satiric attack on what he saw as the dullness and stupidity of the period. In addition, he directed his barbs toward the lack of imagination and inspiration in Yale, in the ministry, and in society in general. In couplets, the poem advocates education for immediate uses, taught in modern idiom, for women as well as men. Anything less, the poem points out, contributes to dullness and stupidity.

The other Wits also wrote in the neo-classic tradition. Timothy Dwight's "Triumph of Infidelity" and "Greenfield Hill" were neo-classic in technique. The "Triumph of Infidelity" was especially derivative as a satiric attack on non-conformists. Joel Barlow,

too, in "The Conspiracy of Kings," replying to Burke, and "The Hasty Pudding," a mock-heroic tribute to cornmeal mush, wrote in the neo-classic tradition.

Philip Freneau's verse also shows the influence of neo-classicism especially in the poetry inspired by the Revolution and by the postwar political disputes. During the Revolution such poems as "A Political Litany", "George the Third's Soliloquy", and "The British Prison Ship" were satiric attacks on the British and on the king, a poetic tendency that he put behind him later as he turned to American subject matter and the new romanticism. In other fields, too, the influences of neo-classic satire are obvious. In the drama, Royall Tyler satirizes fops, fashions, and affectations in *The Contrast*, much as did the poets. *Modern Chivalry*, by Hugh Henry Brackenridge, satirizes almost all of the contemporary American scene, from the backwoods to the nation's capitol, and from the illiterate immigrant or pioneer to the scientist.

In general, as the period progressed, the influences of neo-classicism diminished, and the last decade of the eighteenth century saw the decline of neo-classicism and the rise of the new romanticism in American literature, just as in English literature. But the phenomenon in America may be ascribed at least to partially myriad reasons, uniquely American. The growth of the new nation and its accompanying national consciousness; the decline of British literary prestige, turning American writers away from their British neo-classical models; and the demand for a national literature, which led American writers to turn to their native materials, were three important factors contributing to the American romantic trend.

The most important aspects of romanticism in the literature of the period are found in poetry, and among the poems, in the later works of Philip Freneau. In his search for American materials and forms, Freneau turned away from his English models and pioneered many roman.ic concepts in subject matter, mood, emotion, and verse form. "To an Author" deplores the lack of appreciation of the poet of fancy, who is the true poet of nature.

"Pictures of Columbus" shows romantic tendencies in its efforts to construct an American epic; its characters are romanticized, as is the vivid picture of nature, and its simplified structure is a departure from the rigid neo-classical forms. "The House of Night" shows the romantic fancy of the poet; in it the scenery, form, and atmosphere are romantic. The sensuous beauty of the exotic and the romanticized Indian in "The Beauties of Santa Cruz" represent romantic lyricism at its best.

"The Wild Honeysuckle" and "The Indian Burying Ground" illustrate the most highly romantic in Freneau's poetry. "The Wild Honeysuckle" uses a peculiarly American wild flower as a focal point for the poet's emotion, and the flower gives opportunity for displaying the poet's sadness at the transient quality of life. "The Indian Burying Ground" utilizes the American Indian in a romantic capacity, displaying the noble savage concept that deliberately denied reality. In his later poetry Freneau displays paradoxes of the transition from the age of reason to the age of romanticism. One finds a double concept of nature in his poetry: it is a perfectly-running machine, and at the same time it is the source of emotional inspiration for flights of fancy of the poet. The concept of human nature, too, displays a paradox. In his rationalistic verse, Freneau sees man as an imperfectly-functioning machine, whereas in his romantic verse, he shows the Indian as noble and idealized and Columbus as a wise, idealistic wanderer.

Traces of incipient romanticism may be found in some of the other literature of the period, but much of this may be more easily attributed to the rise of nationalism than to romantic impulses, although the two, as we have seen, go hand in hand. Charles Brockden Brown's novels, in their use of American subject matter and settings; Timothy Dwight's "topographic" poem, "Greenfield Hill"; Royall Tyler's idealization of the American type in *The Contrast*, and his approval of "natural" behavior, all display evidences of the forthcoming romantic period.

In general, however, the age was transitional. The full impact of romanticism would not be felt yet for a number of years, and the literature of the age, while displaying tendencies or trends, or,

as in the case of Freneau, well-defined examples, still must properly be considered pre-romantic, rather than truly romantic, just as it cannot be considered a national literature yet in spite of the conscious attempts to make it such.

The true significance of the writing of the early years of the United States lies neither in belletristic excellence nor in the construction of a national literary tradition. It lies rather in the closeness with which it defined an American ideal of human relationships which, while not yet attained, is, nevertheless, still sought and gradually but positively approached. Its significance lies, too, in the fact that it made a beginning, erecting the foundation upon which the great American romantic idealists of the next generation would construct a literary tradition that came close to achieving the American ideal in literature. Emerson, Whitman, Melville, and so many others built upon the early foundation, all of them believing that the faith of Freneau, of Jefferson, and of the host of lesser figures of the early years was justified. In the years between 1830 and 1860, the years of the American Renaissance, the new American writers would devote themselves to proving that that faith was justified.

CHAPTER II

THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE: THE ROMANTIC TRIUMPH

The years between 1810 and 1860, resplendently studded with the writings of Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Hawthorne, Poe, and so many other great names in American literary history, is the period during which the ferment of the nation's formative years consolidated into a unique national identity, a clearly-defined national ideal, and a strong and mature national literary tradition, each of which was enhanced by and mutually dependent upon the others. As America moved into the fifth decade of its national existence, freedom had not only been won, but it had been consolidated during the second war with England, the War of 1812; democracy, under the eight years of the Jefferson administration, had been established as the national ideal, and a new group of men, most of them born American citizens rather than British subjects, began to appear and to make their voices heard in the solidifying social, political and intellectual structure of the new country.

Although many of these voices, at least early in the period, reveal a self-conscious sense of immaturity and inferiority, never-

theless, those very qualities began to produce a great deal of constructive thinking that reinforced the two dominant ideas that the period inherited from the intellectual conflicts of the generation that preceded it. The first of these ideas was the acceptance of romantic idealism wholeheartedly and completely; the second was a continued and intensified faith in progress and perfectability. Both concepts, mutually reinforcing in their attitudes toward God, man, nature, and the world, provided the intellectual basis for the intense activity of the period, and, most importantly, they provided the substance for the great literature that this age of faith in man inspired.

American romantic idealism was not unique in the nineteenth century by any means; it was part of the great wave of romanticism that swept the western world at the time, giving voice to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, Kant, Goethe, and so many others in Europe, demonstrating, if further evidence is needed, that ideas know no national boundaries. But at the same time that American romanticism was part of and influenced by this revolution in western thought, it had many qualities that made it unique. The first of these is that it received much of its impetus from intensified American nationalism and democracy. Nationalism played little, if any, part in its European counterpart, and the European romantics' demand for freedom and democracy was revolutionary heresy in their own countries rather than accepted national ideology. Consequently, the American romantics had no need to consider themselves revolutionists against a restrictive social and political system; instead, they saw themselves as builders, bringing a national ideal closer to reality, and in their support of the open society they were in the main stream of American social and political thinking as it spread over a rapidly-expanding country.

Geography and religion played equally important parts in the formulation of the American romantic ideal. America was, throughout the period, a dynamic frontier society, a unique situation that not only gave tangible evidence to support the romantic's faith in progress and perfectability and in the individual, but also

contributed an increasing amount of raw materials for literature, a taciturn dignity in bearing, and a sense of quest, purpose, and destiny rather than the lyric escapism and incipient cynicism that constantly threatened to overwhelm the European movement. The ever-expanding west was at once harshly practical and naively romantic, giving popular support to a movement that was never systematized into a cohesive whole, and most importantly, combined with the articulated faith of the men of letters shaping much of the American character as it was then and is today. It was no accident that Emerson, an Eastern intellectual and scholar, became one of the most popular speakers ever to visit the new states and towns carved out of the wilderness.

American romanticism was largely a product, too, of the religious atmosphere and debates that characterized dominant American Protestantism as the country forged its national identity during the previous generation. Although the battle against Calvinistic dogmatism in New England had been fought and won in Emerson and Thoreau's youth, it had not eradicated either the Puritan conscience or the Puritan sense of responsibility, both of which sought to effect a stormy balance in the Romantic mind. Conscience demanded propagation and reform; responsibility demanded decorum; both, as the intensity of the slavery controversy intensified, demanded action, eventually giving a concentrated purpose to the movement and contributing at the same time to the eventual destruction of both slavery and romanticism itself.

American romanticism and American Transcendentalism are often considered to be synonymous, and indeed, so closely are they interwoven that attempts to make a distinction are inevitably unsatisfactory. However, perhaps the only safe generalization to make is that the Transcendentalists, such as Emerson and Thoreau, were always romantics, whereas many of the romantics, especially in the Southern and Mid-Atlantic states, were usually not Transcendentalists, as is evident in the works of Edgar Allan Poe. Transcendentalism was essentially an intellectual and philosophic movement that accepted and attempted to systematize the

intuitive wisdom of romantic idealism, producing literature in the process; romanticism, as exemplified by Poe, was an aesthetic movement that sought to fuze form and emotion. Together they gave breadth and depth to a movement that influenced world literature so strongly that its effects, in modern poetry particularly, are felt even yet. The route from Poe and Whitman to E. E. Cummings and T. S. Eliot is devious but fascinating.

As the rationale of American idealism, the common core of belief in the works of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, and others of the period, Transcendentalism is especially important. Essentially it was a movement that attempted to resolve the basic dualism of the universe, the spectre that manifests itself in manifestations of body and soul, matter and spirit, into a unified whole. The attempt, as theology and philosophy amply illustrate, was not new, but the beliefs that emanated from it provided a revolutionary impetus that is felt even yet in the independence of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and in the sit-in demonstrations throughout the American South.

Actually reacting strongly against the mechanistic rationalism of the eighteenth century, the Transcendentalists, drawing loosely upon the German idealism of Kant as transmuted by Carlyle and Coleridge and popularized treatments of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, believed that the ultimate reality of the universe was not the mechanistic machine of the Enlightenment but was pure spirit, the Over-Soul, as Emerson termed it. Embracing all things, the Over-Soul, God if you prefer, was, in turn, reflected in the phenomena of the universe, including man himself. Man's role was to come to understand this manifestation of pure spirit in himself and to govern his life in accordance with it. Rejecting the pure reason of the Enlightenment as a means, the romantics asserted that man could come to know himself and hence God only through the exercise of his intuition, which, perversely and confusingly, they prefered to call reason.

The acceptance of this world view carried with it certain basic beliefs. The first of these is indicative of both an intimate relationship between God and man and of the origin of each indivi-

dual's innate dignity and worth: God is in Man, and Man is in God. Thus, to know God and to do his will, each man must know and trust himself. This concept, of course, is the basis of Emerson's constant exhortation to "Know thyself", the ultimate source of unity with God.

The second major belief provides the rationale for a denial of dualism: the apparent dualism in the universe merely indicates that there is a correspondence between matter and spirit, not a merging, but a reflection of spirit in matter, a reflection that indicates that the source of all things is God. Consequently, each material thing in the universe exists only because it symbolizes the great universal spirit of which it is a part. The key, then, to the mind and will of God is contained in Nature, in which he has clothed it.

But pure reason cannot carry man from the thing to the idea; it cannot transcend the apparent gap between the two. Only man's intuition, his extra-sensory ability to accept the truth emotionally even when it defies logic, can carry him across this gap and to ultimate union and harmony with the hereafter. Physical laws, generalized from empirical knowledge, can lead man to knowledge of the laws of God, but man must go beyond empiricism to find them.

The Transcendental position was considered not only unorthodox but an affront to traditional theology, a paradoxical position held by many who at the same time accepted Emerson as the prophet of the new American intellectual and literary renaissance. Accusations of heresy against Emerson have disappeared from American cultural history, but Emerson remains erect in the center of a company of literary giants, represented by vigorous, if sometimes convoluted, prose and a vision of man, both of them as provocative, as inspiring, and as potent as they were a hundred years ago. Any discussion of American romanticism would be unsatisfactory without looking first at his central role and at the essays in which he gave force and direction to the movement.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, born in Boston in 1803, was the product both of a long line of New England Calvinist and later Unitarian

ministers and of the new American democratic republic, two of the major environmental factors that were to result in his lifelong reverence for God and for man and to provide the cornerstones for his Transcendentalism. A philosophical idealist by nature, he was a wide, eclectic reader from childhood, constantly seeking information and stimulation. By 1829 he had graduated from the Boston Latin School, Harvard College, and the Harvard Divinity School; and he was an ordained Unitarian minister and pastor of the Second Church of Boston, presumably settled in the career that he had been destined for from the beginning.

But in the background the unity, both of Emerson's early faith and of the neo-classical world, had broken down, and much of his thinking and reading was devoted to attempting to resolve the ensuing dichotomy, a problem that his conventional theological background could not answer satisfactorily. In the first entry in his journal he comments on the nature of "this spectre dualism", and his ensuing literary, philosophical, and theological thinking revolve around it, just as his essays are attempts to resolve it.

Consequently, Emerson's intellectual career may be divided into three convenient periods: the earliest, to 1833, in which his search for answers led him to break with his church; the middle period, between 1833 and the mid 1840's, in which he became a confirmed Transcendentalist; and the last period, from the mid 1840's until his retirement in 1872, in which he saw his carefully constructed answers laid waste by the materialism and evil that he denied.

During the early period he had, of course, studied Unitarian theology, itself quite important for its emphasis upon the unity inherent in the Godhead. But this did not provide the easy transition from matter to spirit, from man to God, that he sought, so he turned first to Hobbes and the rationalists, but rejected them for Plato and the Neo-Platonists, whose resolution of dualism by intuition he found especially attractive and by the doctrine of emanation, which was to influence his theory of literary composition. From oriental thought he absorbed the concept of the Brahma—an impersonalized, unified Deity—and the concept of symbolism, of the thing symbolizing the idea. Discovering Cole-

ridge and Carlyle, and through them German idealism, he began to formulate tentative answers that made it impossible for him to continue in the church. Resigning in late 1832, ostensibly over a disagreement about the nature of the communion service, but actually because of profound philosophical differences, he sailed for Europe to visit and learn from the propagators of the new wisdom.

During his middle period, between 1833 and the mid-1840's, Emerson not only became famous as an essayist, poet, and lecturer, but most importantly from the point of view of literary study, he was a confirmed Transcendentalist, systematizing the many influences and insights he absorbed into a logical philosophical structure with its foundation based on the belief in the spiritual nature of the Universe and its keystone the sixth sense of intuition that would lead man to God. On his return from Europe in 1833 he began to formulate his plan for the essay *Nature*, later published anonymously in 1836, the most complete expression of his philosophical position, a position that, at this time in his life, he was convinced, contained all the answers to man's eternal questions.

An understanding of *Nature* is essential to understanding both Emerson's philosophy and his later major literary works. Starting in approved traditional philosophical fashion, Emerson defines his terms carefully in the Introduction. At the heart of his concept is his view of the nature of the universe—that it is composed of two elements, Nature and the Soul. To Emerson, everything that is separate from the individual, that is, the "not me", is considered to be Nature, a term which he states will be used both in its common sense, that is, in references to physical nature, and in its all-inclusive philosophical sense. Art, then, he asserts, is the working of man's will upon Nature in its common sense, an operation that is of little consequence when viewed in proportion to the grand sweep of creation as an influence on man's mind.

After his introduction, Emerson devotes the rest of the essay, divided into eight major parts, to an examination of the relationship between nature, in both its common and its philosophical sense, and man. In part one, "Nature," he defines the basic rela-

tionship, asserting that although most men are able to see various objects in nature, they see them imperfectly, that is, they see nature in its common sense of innumerable isolated objects. Consequently, they fail to see it in its philosophical sense, as a great unified whole manifesting the brilliant and beautiful mind that brought it into being and that may be seen and known behind it. When nature is viewed properly, Emerson says, "all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God." This provides Emerson with the basis of both the essay and his philosophy: first, he believes that God is in each man and each man is in God as part of the great spiritual unity of the universe. Secondly, he believes that there is a correspondence—not an actual merging but a reflection of one in the other—between all matter and all spirit.

In the rest of the essay Emerson devotes his attention to a close examination of the nature of the unity that sees God and man joined in the physical universe and the spiritual universe behind it. Beginning with "Commodity", the most obvious use of nature to satisfy man's material need of food, clothing, and shelter, he proceeds to increasingly complex and abstract relationships. In "Beauty" he points out that nature serves to fill man's aesthetic needs physically, spiritually, and aesthetically. Physical beauty is provided as a basis by enabling man to enjoy the simple perception of natural forms; spiritual beauty is provided by teaching him virtue through natural examples rather than through the arbitrary dogma of man-made institutions; and intellectual beauty stems from nature's ability to communicate to man standards of value, of taste, and artistic works. When man seeks to satisfy his need for beauty, Emerson sends him to nature, the direct revelation of the natural beauty of God.

In "Language" Emerson asserts that nature itself is not only a means of communication between God and man but that it is the source of all communication among men. Language is the communication of inward facts in outward terms that are words, symbols of reality rather than reality itself, and nature is the

source of those symbols. Furthermore, nature itself is a symbol, a concrete symbol of spiritual truth, that is, of the eternal truth of God. Hence, he says, nature is the symbolic representation of all truth, the language by which God communicates to man, and man must study nature as symbol in order to understand ultimate truth and wisdom.

As "Discipline", nature is, then, the source of all education, and man must turn to it to develop his faculties to their highest degree. Experience in nature educates man's Understanding (reason) through the example of the physical laws that govern natural phenomena; it educates man's Reason (intuition in the Romantic sense) through the example of the spiritual laws that are manifest in the physical laws of nature; and, most importantly, it teaches man that behind all, there is the great unity of God or the Oversoul. Thus, nature as language communicates the existence and nature of God by educating man to a gradual but inevitable perception of God.

In "Idealism" Emerson builds on these progressions from physical appearance to spiritual reality by asserting his concept of the world as idea. Nature, that is, the common concept of nature, is not real, he asserts. The only reality is the idea behind it, the idea of unity inherent in diversity. For evidence of this assertion, Emerson turns to Reason (intuition), to the instinctive awareness in man that somewhere, behind the facade of appearance, there is truth. He turns, too, to proofs in nature of abstractions underlying things, to the insight of the poet, the scientist, and the philosopher, all of whom are led to generalize from particulars, and to science and religion, both of which approach the idea through the evidence of the world and the ritualized procedure either of method or of worship.

Emerson concludes *Nature* by discussions of "Spirit", of the concept that nature itself, in its philosophical sense, is pure spirit, a manifestation of God. In forming the bridge between man's physical universe of appearance and God's spiritual world of reality, it is, in effect, the transcendental link that man, through the exercise of his intuition, can use to carry himself to ultimate unity

with God. Not only is nature an expositor of God's mind to man, but it, in effect, is God's mind because in it nature has its only existence.

After this exposition of his philosophical position Emerson turns to "Prospects", to the promise of the future. With the optimism of the romantic idealist, he recognizes that man has thus far failed to comprehend the mind of God revealed in nature, but he is confident that he will, that he will apply his Understanding and Reason to himself and to the world of nature, in the process coming to recognize his place in the ultimate unity of God.

Nature is not only Emerson's most comprehensive statement of belief, points of which are expanded or elucidated in later essays, but it presents, too, an example of the Transcendental literary and philosophical technique at its clearest. As Emerson demonstrates, physical appearance, that is, the material world, is the logical point of departure for an examination of the spiritual reality behind it. Thus, nature in its common sense must be examined and understood as a basis, and Emerson does this in the essay by examining the most obvious physical relations between man and his environment. But then man must transcend the physical, using his intuition, both to tell him that behind appearance there is meaning, and then to reveal to himself what that meaning is. To Emerson it is the truth of unity in God, the source and container of all things.

In succeeding essays—*The American Scholar* (1837), *The Divinity School Address* (1838), *Self-Reliance* (1841), and others in the collections of 1841 and 1844—Emerson explored many other facets of the unique relationship that he saw evident among God, man, and nature. In the first he not only pled eloquently for an American literary and intellectual tradition, but he defined the nature of the scholar as "Man Thinking"; in his address before the Harvard Divinity School he elevated man to divinity at the expense of traditional Christianity, denying miracles, prayers, and rituals as a means of approaching God; in *Self-Reliance* he preached the sublime doctrines of self-knowledge and self-trust, doctrines that have frequently been misunderstood, but that amplify his belief that

God, manifested in man, is the ultimate source of wisdom, virtue, and strength. In these and all the essays of this period Emerson proclaimed his faith eloquently and confidently.

As a confirmed Transcendentalist Emerson spoke with the certainty of youthful assurance, a quality that the worlds of science and of human malevolence were even then conspiring to defeat. But at this stage, the height of the romantic revolt against tradition, he had no peer as the spokesman of the movement in America. In his doctrines of human worth and dignity he is the representative man of American idealism; he is a constructive critic of the American reality; and he is an eloquent, forceful writer.

But most importantly Emerson remains as poet and as prophet. As poet he sought the fusion of form and idea that gives the literary work the dignity of true art, recognizing that nevertheless the idea, the ethical impulse rather than form alone, is the ultimate determining factor. And as prophet he foresaw a day when man would come into his own as master of himself and of his destiny, when his dignity and his wisdom would prevail, and he would achieve the good that is latent within him.

The third phase of Emerson's career is the story of the decline and fall of romantic idealism as, in the late 1840's and early 1850's, he withdrew further from the world around him, becoming first a complete intuitionist and departing from the main stream of romanticism by rejecting Reason for a mystic intuition that denied existence or importance to anything other than itself. Actually he was fighting a delaying action against the inroads of science and the heightened slavery controversy, both of which threatened the foundations of his faith. By the mid 1850's, he lost all his certainty, he tried unsuccessfully to join science with idealism by an inept synthesis that would support his concept of Unity. But the publication of *The Origin of Species* provided the final blow when he found himself unable either to answer its premises or to incorporate them into his theories. Slavery and the Civil War largely ended his idealism as he became an angry abolitionist, demanding not only freedom for the slaves but punishment for the slaveholders. During these years of intense activity and excite-

ment he produced little of literary value, and then, his faculties failing, by 1872 he went into decline, to die bitter and disillusioned ten years later.

Emerson, as spokesman and theorist for American romanticism at its peak, transcended a narrow conventional view to achieve a vision that sees a human ideal not yet realized but as worthy of the attempted achievement as it was in his own day. In his view of the nature of man and of man's strength and destiny even yet he provides a stimulus for thought and an impetus for action that is eloquent, compelling, and evocative of an ever-pertinent ideal.

But as significant a part as Emerson plays in American romanticism, he was not, of course, the entire movement. This was the first great era of American literary history, resplendent with names that are household words today, and each of whom is deserving of exhaustive individual treatment as they sought a unity of real and ideal perhaps too far for human minds and hands to grasp. Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman and Melville, among these great figures, sought, each in his own way, to penetrate the mask of appearance and to probe the nature of an underlying spiritual reality. In essence, however, in spite of much variation among individuals and the sometimes contradictory works of individual authors, each of them accepted basic common qualities, a fusion of which gave depth, breadth, and identity to American romanticism. In subject matter they turned to nature, to the past, to the commonplace and the exotic, all sources in which, detached from the pressures of the immediate and the inevitable conflict of action, they could find permanence and stability as well as inspirational and provocative material for their probe of reality. In technique each of them sought to use surface reality as a point of departure from whence to probe intuitively to an underlying spiritual essay. For them the world was symbol, and each attempted to define its meaning.

Underlying these literary qualities and giving them strength and cohesion is the romantic philosophy, the firm conviction that Truth, Beauty, and Goodness are the trinity fused into one ultimate spiritual reality. Convinced that by striving man can achieve

identity with this goodness and attain the perfection he is capable of, each of them sought to point out the way, an attempt that carried within itself potential danger to its cause as well as promise for its success.

Between 1850 and 1860 the dangers inherent in romanticism overcame its promise, for romanticism, in seeking a final, unified, all-inclusive answer carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction, just as had its rationalistic predecessor. In the final analysis, just as rationalism could not find a place in its structure for the emotional, romanticism could not refute the existence of matter, and especially of evil as a harsh reality. This was the shoal upon which the works of each of the great romantics as well as the movement itself eventually floundered. Science had already, by 1850, demonstrated clearly that the ultimate reality was in all probability physical rather than spiritual; war and especially the slavery crisis and ensuing Civil War, pointed out that perhaps man was neither naturally good nor destined to progress to perfectability. And the evils resulting from the industrial revolution tended to intensify the romantic dilemma. For Emerson the problem was beyond solution; Melville wrestled mightily but without victory with the problem of evil in *Moby-Dick;* Thoreau and Hawthorne died with the apparent reality of evil triumphant as both attempted withdrawals. Whitman went on, writing and rewriting *Leaves of Grass* in apparent confidence, but increasingly, after the Civil War, taking refuge in a secular and patriotic mysticism at odds with the spirit of the times that earlier he had expressed so perfectly. The romantic revolution, like its many predecessors was, by 1860, over, for all practical purposes. Ultimately it, like the others, was not successful because it attempted too much in seeking the final answers. Its failure must not be ascribed to a lack of truth; it did, as is evident, contain much that was true. But, like every philosophical and literary structure that man has yet erected, it did not and could not contain with it the ultimate truth that man has sought unsuccessfully from the beginning.

CHAPTER III

ROMANTIC PROBLEMS AND PRACTICES: MELVILLE AND WHITMAN

Unlike Emerson, who, in spite of radical and revolutionary pronouncements early in his career, was accepted and hailed in his day as America's spokesman for romantic idealism, Herman Melville and Walt Whitman did not gain a wide measure of appreciation until much later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Only recently, in fac., has renewed interest, both scholarly and secular, brought with it a greater understanding of their works. For, just as Emerson found much of his acceptance precisely because he was so frequently misunderstood, Melville and Whitman were so often neglected or rejected because they, too, were inevitably misunderstood by their contemporaries.

Ascribing reasons for this neglect is, from the vantage point of perspective, not difficult. The prime reason, I suspect, is that both Melville and Whitman were of their time in that they drew upon its intellectual stimuli for their sustenance but, as late romantics, they moved ahead of their time, Whitman in technique and vision, and Melville in his symbolic grasp of the great struggle between good and evil that was to come as materialism gained

ascendency in the twentieth century. Because Whitman did not move out of the century, in spite of his freedom in technique and frankness of expression, recognition for him came earlier, in the closing years of his own lifetime, but Melville, treating the identical problems that the neo-romantics of the twentieth century—men like Hemingway and Sherwood Anderson—were to probe, was, in spirit if not in technique and subject matter, very much a man of the twentieth century.

Modern literary scholarship and criticism have consequently probed deeply if belatedly into the works of both men in the attempt to determine the nature of their vision as well as the means whereby they expressed it. The complexity of both men's works has led to a number of controversies that prohibit any definitive critical pronouncements except an agreement on the immensity of their stature. But modern criticism has, however, identified broad areas of critical analysis that may profitably be pursued for an enhanced understanding and appreciation of the magnitude of their works. At the same time it has also defined broad areas of literary practice by each, areas that, when examined, cast much light on the nature of their works. The literary problems and practices inherent in Whitman's work, while complex, are less so than those in Melville's. Because of this difference in complexity and because the Whitman problems and practices are more clearly defined than Melville's, it is more profitable to discuss Whitman first, laying a foundation upon which contrasts and comparisons between Whitman and Melville in theory, technique, and philosophy may be made.

Because Whitman did not consciously connect himself with any literary or intellectual school, because he was untutored, because he did not regard himself as a self-conscious artist but as a conscious voice of the people, the major literary problems inherent in his life-work *Leaves of Grass* fall into three major categories. The first of these is in the curious nature of the "Leaves" as a poetic work. It did not appear in its present final form until the edition of 1891-1892, the last edition compiled and authorized by Whitman himself. Appearing in nine or ten editions (a problem

yet unsolved) between 1855, the date of the first, and 1891-1892, it is apparent that Whitman regarded the "Leaves" as an organic work as he expanded, rewrote, reshuffled, and changed points of view over the years. This constant growth and change, the result of Whitman's belief that each edition except the last was merely a tentative edition, points out the major textual problem inherent in the work: Whitman's method of composition, his attitude toward it, and his concept of the nature of poetry. In this area much fruitful work has been done, as in Gay Wilson Allen's *Walt Whitman Handbook*, Irving Story's "The Growth of *Leaves of Grass*", and a host of others. Consequently we can, and shall later, in examining Whitman's practice, define and provide tentative answers to many of these problems, but, it is clear, the definitive answers have for the most part eluded us.

The second major problem is the nature of Whitman's style, technique, and poetic quality, all of which are elements centering around and growing out of his poetic philosophy. Whitman did not consciously formulate these ideas, however, just as he never worked out a systematized philosophy, an idea that was anathema to him. But, fortunately, the "Leaves" themselves *are* Whitman's definitive statement, and in them he gave voice to many of his concepts and clearly implied as many more. Consequently, as we shall see, they provide fascinating material for speculation and hypothesis, the very thought of which would, I am sure, frighten but secretly please Walt Whitman himself. This problem, too, resolves itself into a class of literary problems.

The third major problem lies in Whitman's relationship to the contemporary thought of his age. Generally classified as a romantic in subject matter and technique and a Transcendentalist in philosophy, nevertheless an examination of the work indicates the danger of such academically useful generalizations. Whitman's political, social, and philosophical thought, his intellectual and mystically emotional points of view, are all drawn out for us in the "Leaves" and in his prose works, but here, too, it is evident that there is no one answer but an entire class of problems that grow out of tentative answers and that demand their own solutions.

Textual problems are best reserved for a different kind of treatment than it is possible to give them here, and furthermore, it is often difficult to elicit from them the kind of intellectual excitement that grows out of literary and intellectual problems. Consequently, we shall turn to the last two problems, to those that approach Whitman as a literary artist, in order to seek to answer the ultimate critical questions that must be answered in any literary evaluation: what has the writer attempted in his work, and with what degree of success? Fortunately the very nature of Whitman's work puts answers to these questions within our reach.

In turning first to Whitman's style, technique, and poetic quality, it is well to remember that the organic structure of *Leaves of Grass* indicates that Whitman did not commence with pre-conceived literary ideas but let them evolve in the course of his work. His prime objective was expression, and from the beginning he permitted form to follow and grow out of idea. Consequently, because his basic purpose from the inception of his poetic career was to give full vent to natural, uninhibited feeling and idea, preconceived and confining technical care would have inhibited him and from his point of view would have cast doubt on the authenticity of both his experience and his expression. All of his relationships with man, the subject of the bulk of his work, are emotional; therefore, formal poetic patterns would have altered or subverted his work at once.

At the heart of his concept of free and spontaneous expression is Whitman's view of the relationship between himself and his reader, as he sees it the most intimate of relations. Unlike the conventional poet who seeks understanding, Whitman wants his reader to participate in his experience, and, under his guidance, to feel what he feels. In this approach, the desire to provide the reader with the materials out of which he can re-create experience, Whitman is most modern, anticipating the contemporary view that the reader or viewer must participate in the creative experience.

Whitman's concept of poetry as organic is at the heart of his general concept of the nature of art just as it is part of his view of the nature of the cosmos itself. The world, like poetry, grows

from small origins through ever-increasing and more exclusive circles; hence, the growth of the world and the growth of art are part of the same phenomenon, and man and his environment move onward and outward at the same time. The function of the artist, as Whitman constantly implies, is to reflect this growth in his work, but not consciously and intellectually, because that would destroy it. Instead, he must reflect it intuitively, serving as a sensitive instrument for conveying continuous progress and the perception of unity behind seemingly endless variety. To Whitman, the artist is not to reorder or systematize experience and phenomena but to reflect what his intuition tells him exists.

In this concept Whitman is most nearly a Transcendentalist, but, unlike Emerson, he did not attempt to formalize the belief. Instead, he allowed it to form the basis of his work. However, like Emerson, he believed that poetry was to reflect the spirit of things, the reality behind appearance, rather than things themselves, and the ultimate subject of his poetry is the creativity of God, the force that is at the heart of the cosmos, rather than creation itself. This, for Whitman, is the true symbol of God in the universe, and in his poetry all of nature is active rather than static creativity. In his concern with the spirit behind things rather than the things themselves, he is at once a romantic and a Transcendentalist, but he is unconcerned with an ultimate manifestation of ethics or morals; instead, he sees the universe as a good and vital form.

At the heart of Whitman's approach to poetry, then, lies this principle: he is to reflect this concept of creative power directly, neither ornamenting nor distorting it by his own consciousness. Thus, in rejecting conventional poetic forms and techniques, he is not acting as a conscious literary artist but as an unconscious transmitter of what is. Unlike Emerson, who carefully organizes his material, selecting and rejecting as it becomes necessary, Whitman is conscious of the totality of experience. Consequently, nothing is subordinate or unimportant; everything is vital, so there can be no standard for selection or rejection, and form, logic, and ornamentation become not merely superfluous, but actually a

danger to completeness of transmission. It is, however, quite evident that acceptance of this point of view is dependent upon an untutored naivete, an innocence that Whitman was to preserve, together with his enthusiasm, long after most of us lose it on the increasingly restrictive path through middle age.

In Whitman's treatment of nature, it is evident that he sees it abhoring mechanical regularity. As its sprawling organic growth makes clear, it is uncontrolled and unregulated, and Whitman, reflecting nature in his verse, is as irregular as he sees nature to be. The relationship between his style and form is not, then, a matter of poetic principle but of purpose. Almost uniquely, Whitman demonstrates rather than asserts as Emerson did that form follows idea. Such a poetic philosophy is intrinsic to his works, accounting not only for problems in style and technique, but leading directly to his concepts of self and of man.

In his view of the function of the poet as transmitter of human experience, as a voice for man, and as a typical, representative man, Whitman leads directly to the concept of the expanded ego, the ultimate universal relationship among all men. His constant references to "I, Walt Whitman", annoying as they have seemed to many, are symbolic manifestations of this concept, referring to himself generically rather than specifically. In seeing himself, the poet, as representative man, with perhaps greater insight and sensitivity, Whitman sees himself and mankind as synonymous, deserving of love and understanding, and, like Emerson, he believes that the subjective experience, subjective love and understanding, are by their very nature universal. Most subjective poetry is just that, demanding understanding, but for Whitman the subjective experience and subjective poetry are mutual and universal. Instead of the defiant lack of adjustment between poet and the world evident in most subjective poetry, Whitman's ego, expanded to ever greater proportions, is constantly seeking a closer and closer adjustment.

Whitman, then, deals with what he sees as universal experience rather than personal; he sees each thing in nature and each individual being not as apart from others but as a fragment of a pan-

theistic whole; like Emerson, he sees each person as a part of a world soul, and the ultimate reality is a mystic pantheistic relationship among all men. In showing this, the philosophical basis of his work, he starts with the subjective "I" and goes on to embrace all men.

All of these concepts are evident in *Leaves of Grass*, and understanding of it must ultimately come from its organic nature. Whitman tried to incarnate in it and in himself the entire range of nineteenth century America, not as he felt it should be nor as a statement of belief, although both are evident in the work, but as it was. Actually Whitman is the first great American writer produced by the intellectual climate brought about by his predecessors; consequently he is instinctively and naturally an American democrat. In his own person, then, he reflects the type of man that those who sought a national identity and culture thought would be and should be. Consequently, he personifies the major categories of nineteenth century American experience, in technique, in subject matter, and in philosophy. In attempting to convey the spirit and meaning of his experience as representative of all men's, he succeeds in conveying the spirit of his times more successfully and completely than any of his contemporaries.

Whitman's reflection of America's optimism, dynamism, and restless activity; his awe and respect for the magnitude of the country; his acceptance of the mystical unity of all experience; and his pantheistic justification of God to man stand in sharp contrast to Herman Melville's explorations of the ceaseless battle that goes on in the dark recesses of the human soul. Like Whitman, Melville, too, sought to define the nature of reality underlying appearance, a reality, however, that reflects not a justification of God to man but a Kafkaesque nightmare in which man seeks to justify himself to God by isolating responsibility and commitment out of apparent meaninglessness. For Whitman, form, order, and progress are obvious and inherent in the best of all possible universes; for Melville they are ideals hidden, perhaps forever, by chaos.

Although little attention was paid to Melville's work for the

more than fifty years between the 1860's and 1920, there are, with the exception of *Billy Budd*, no major textual problems in the bulk of his publications. They were all, again excepting *Billy Budd*, published in Melville's lifetime, presumably as he wrote them and wanted them to appear. Consequently, the problems inherent in the texts are those that can only be solved by analysis of structure and theme rather than textual analysis. In *Billy Budd*, however, the textual problem, now apparently solved with the publication of what is presumed to be a definitive edition, was enormous after the manuscript was discovered in chaos and what appears to be several conflicting versions, all the products of Melville's last obscure years before his death in 1891.

The major problem inherent in Melville's works stems from their nature: they are highly organized symbolic structures, unique in American romanticism in their complex use of style, structure, and language for symbols. In all of his works Melville probed beneath the surface of society in order to try to find meaning and order in the relationship of surface reality to the nature of man; consequently, even the least of his early works is a multi-level allegory; the following works, as they progress with the development of his skill, become increasingly complex beneath their vividly realistic surfaces, and a pattern in the relationship of the works gradually emerges. For example, there is apparently a close relationship between Captain Ahab in *Moby-Dick* and Billy in *Billy Budd*, so much so that characterization in the two shows that Billy is apparently Melville's answer to the problem that he posed and was unable to solve in *Moby-Dick*. Ahab is defiance personified; Billy is mature compliance; Ahab is vigorous, willful, determined, and doomed; Billy Budd is calmly resigned, accepting, and equally doomed. Is Billy, then, Melville's statement of resignation and defeat, as many critics have commented in accepting it as his final statement? Or is something more complex, the product of the impact of new ideas in the forty years that separated the two and consequently the perception of new problems rather than a surrender to the old? I prefer to think that the latter is the case, but it is a problem that neither I nor any of Melville's other critics

can as yet answer definitively.

Critical analysis of Melville's works, focusing upon *Moby-Dick*, has ranged widely in approach during the past forty years; Freudians have approached them in psychological terms; biographers as biography; symbolists as symbol; linguists as language, but none of the approaches has been satisfactory because all of them and more are necessary in order to bring reasoned order out of the magnitude of his vision. Perhaps if we examine several of the shorter works in detail, omitting *Moby-Dick* both because of its immensity and because it has been probed so deeply and so often, the nature of the problems inherent in Melville as well as his literary practice will become apparent. For our purposes *Billy Budd* and *Bartleby the Scrivener*, the first of which was his last work and the second the product of his great period of the 1850's, will suffice, although for all practical purposes the selection is arbitrary, and *The Confidence Man* and *Benito Cereno* would have been equally satisfactory.

At first glance *Bartleby the Scrivener* seems to be simple, with more humor than is usual in Melville's works. Bartleby is a young man who takes employment in a lawyer's office copying documents. He has no past and no collateral relationships in society. The relationship between the lawyer and the scrivener is satisfactory until Bartleby refuses to copy any more, giving as his only reason the fact that he prefers not to, a reason that the lawyer finsd both unsatisfactory and inexplicable. Consequently, what had appeared to be a normal relationship results in chaos and Bartleby's death.

It is apparent, of course, that Melville is vitally concerned with appearance, as society sees it, in the story, and he is equally concerned with the chaos underlying an apparently normal relationship. Here lies the crux of his problem. The attorney sees with society's eyes and is consequently misled by appearance. Bartleby is a man; hence he must be like other men. But he is not: he has no history; everything he says is negative; he detaches himself from life around him. Therefore, he defies classification on society's terms because although he appears to be normal, it is evident that

he is not. The key to the story, then, appears to be Melville's use of normality as a foil.

Bartleby is suggested to be only loosely attached to the realities of life; he eats little, sleeps little, and upsets people by doing as little as he can. The conflict is based upon society's assumptions or expectations of what he should do rather than what he does, but Bartleby is not concerned with society's affairs; he is only concerned with his own. The lawyer assumes that the practice of law is a valid activity; he can assume nothing else, whereas Bartleby can and does. When he gives up coyping, the lawyer assumes all sorts of reasons except the one that Melville makes evident: the fact that copying is futile and not worth doing. In so doing, it appears that Melville is criticizing society and the futility or insanity of much that it accepts. But Bartleby is not a saint-figure, as social criticism would have him under these circumstances, so it is evident that Melville has something else in mind.

The documents, it is evident, are part of the orderly, legal functioning of society, but they make sense only if the order of society is accepted. But Bartleby, refusing to accept society's order, sees that they are not only meaningless, but that the lawyer, concerned with documents about trivialities, is as far removed from ultimate values as possible. In spite of the lawyer's inability to accept this possibility, he eventually sees that Bartleby must be removed so that order may reassert itself.

The fact that Bartleby's behavior results in chaos suggests another possibility—that the story is a study in frustrations and misunderstandings rather than of society's shortcomings. Bartleby, by his passivity, or perhaps in spite of it, produces chaos and malfunctioning around him because he is disorderly in an orderly world. Bartleby, as a disrupting factor with a different set of values, is indicative of a complete lack of communication between the two levels. But this lack remains, ending on a note of ambiguity as does *Moby-Dick*.

This suggests, then, that Melville sees society as ambiguous, with some portions valid and others invalid, thus producing the nightmare of misunderstanding. Melville, as a pre-modern, sees this

as disturbing; he attempts to go further, because, like Conrad and T. S. Eliot, he cannot accept chaos, but he cannot, and he attempts to reject chaos but is unable to.

This note of ambiguity is the heart of the critical problem in the works of Melville's great period; critical attempts to solve it have failed, as has Richard Chase's biographical attempt, which is too literal and too much at odds with other analyses to be satisfactory. The levels are evident; the symbols are obvious; but the ambiguity remains, provocative as it is, to defy definitive analysis.

Billy Budd is too often accepted as Melville's answer to this problem of ambiguity, and, like *Bartleby the Scrivener*, it appears, at least at first glance, that the symbolic structure is obvious and consequently that Melville has finally accepted the order that Bartleby had rejected so much earlier. But, as we shall see, the same problems remain in spite of didactic characterization that presumably solves the dilemma.

In the story, Billy Budd, a simple, inarticulate, but completely good young man, who is impressed aboard a British man-of-war, comes into conflict with Claggett, a completely evil man, and Claggett is killed. Thereupon Captain Vere, the commander, after much soul searching, orders Billy hanged. Billy is executed, and presumably order triumphs at the expense of good, as at the conclusion of *Bartleby the Scrivener*, but Billy accepts his fate gladly, thereby apparently resolving the earlier ambiguity.

Symbolic analysis of the story appears at first to bear out this analysis. Billy, unlike Bartleby, is a Christ-like figure, and Clagett is pure evil. Billy's complete innocence, apparently pure virtue, is a product of his inability to recognize evil or motives other than his own, and at the same time it combines with his only physical flaw, his stuttering, to produce his tragic flaw. Claggett's evil is equally innate, and it leads inevitably to his end. But, it is important to note, neither Billy nor Claggett is shown to be what he is; Melville merely tells us that each man has his peculiar nature, diametrically opposed to the other. The killing of Claggett, it is equally important to note, is completely involuntary, the result

of Billy's inability to articulate rather than of any evil act on Claggett's part. This complete lack of motivation points out that both men function merely as symbols, pointing to another, more important aspect of the story's structure. This is the role of Captain Vere, the focal point of the problem.

Vere (meaning literally truth or man) is the arbiter of order on the ship. At the same time he is limited by his abilities as a man, and he serves as a father-symbol to Billy. His dilemma, then, is that he is faced with a legal problem, a moral problem, and a personal problem, all in one. Hence, the problem of choice is his, and he has many possibilities, as he recognizes, thus providing the essence of tragedy as his loyalties and duties come into conflict. He understands the dilemma that faces him, but he chooses to do his duty, fully aware of its implications.

Billy, on the other hand, accepts the necessity of his own death. Because he is unable to understand any other implication it is evident that he is something other than the tragic hero that his Christ-like nature suggests. Consequently, he accepts his filial role and his punishment; he dies expiating, but he has no concept of what it is that he is expiating. His death, an apparently obvious crucifixion symbol as he is raised on the yardarm, results in the erection of a sailor's myth resembling that of the growth of Christianity, but it is evident that behind the myth is little except simple inarticulation.

Yet Vere remains, neither mythical nor abstract but entirely human, having done what he had to do, conscious of the fact that he couldn't do the right thing, no matter what he might have chosen. In this recognition, Melville ends on the same note of ambiguity that he had in his earlier works, and Vere remains as everyman, the tragic hero. In this ambiguity Melville anticipates the problem at the core of much modern literature, evident in Kafka, in Joyce, and in Eliot. Billy and Claggett represent the moral order of good and evil, and Vere the pragmatic order of society; between them man has a choice, but, as Vere, the true tragic hero demonstrates, he is unable to do right, regardless of his decision. *Billy Budd* does not indicate passive acceptance on

Melville's part; it makes a profound statement on the meaning of ultimate justice, but its precise meaning awaits closer analysis.

The ambiguities with which Melville leaves us contrast strongly with the positive pronouncements of Whitman, perhaps suggesting that this juxtapositioning is somewhat ridiculous, that these men have nothing to say to each other nor, in combination, to us. But actually they are very close, representing as they do the polarities of American romantic idealism. Each sought to probe beneath the surface of an apparently endless variety of often conflicting phenomena and to find somewhere below an ultimate reality of order, harmony, beauty, and truth. In technique as well as in faith they are very close. But Whitman sought and found a unity that stems from a vision of God; Melville sought and failed to find his because he probed man. Whitman's vision was as limitless as God's habitat, and he brings us closer to accepting his vision as our own; Melville deliberately refused to accept such a panacea but instead has brought us close to perception of the evil that man does in his fumbling efforts to know God and to serve him. Together they join to proclaim that somewhere there lies truth. And the works they have left us will, perhaps, point out the direction when and if we are capable of resolving their complexities.

CHAPTER IV

A ROMANTIC CONFLICT: THE LITERARY THEORIES OF EMERSON AND POE

Although romanticism in America devoted itself to the reconciliation of appearance and reality, of the physical world and the ideal, and then attempted to express that reconciliation in the literature of the time, there was no easy agreement among the major romantics about the means whereby either reconciliation or expression could best be accomplished. Literary and intellectual arguments were inevitable as the romantics sought justification in rationales to which no two could subscribe, especially in the attempts to define the nature of literature.

Especially revealing is the controversy that inevitably came into being between the two major schools of American romanticism, the intellectual, led by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the aesthetic, whose spokesman was Edgar Allan Poe. Both men attempted definitive answers to the problem of the nature of literature, Emerson in *The Poet*, and Poe in *The Poetic Principle* and *The Philosophy of Composition*. Inasmuch as they were contemporaries and romantics, it is not surprising that there are similarities in their poetic theories, but it is surprising that the similarities are

almost entirely superficial. In their important aspects, the two men evolved theories that are antithetical, theories that reveal clearly the twin polarities of American literature.

In opening his discussion in *The Poet*, Emerson first castigates those persons who set themselves up as arbiters of artistic talent with no more qualifications for the task than a glib passing acquaintanceship with the rudiments of the art under discussion. This, Emerson sees, is caused by the lack of realization, on the parts of these would-be critics and of society in general, that artistic form depends upon inner or spiritual worth and that the material aspect of art is merely an external manifestation of the inner truth which engendered that work of art. This intrinsic relationship between matter and spirit, meaning and act, is, according to Emerson, the essence of art, and in his essay it forms the basis of the poetic philosophy which he propagates. Thus, Emerson approaches the questions of the nature and functions of the poet and of poetry as well as the relationships of both to the physical world in such a way that he bases his concepts upon Transcendentalism, thus formulating a transcendental theory of poetry.

Emerson first considers the poet in his complex relationships to the world and the spirit, the materials which he must draw from in order to practice his art. The poet, says Emerson, by his very nature is a transcender, one who is not only receptive of human experience and of the powers of nature, but one who is able to communicate these experiences, distilled by reason into truth, to his fellow men. The poet "traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart". Hence, he is Emerson's complete man; he is Man Communicating, performing the necessary function of communicating the ideals of truth and beauty to his fellows. This is the poet's peculiar duty, Emerson says, because the poet represents Beauty and speech in the triumvirate of the Universe, standing midway between the Knower, or Truth, and the Doer, or Good. His duty is to write what must and will be written; the others of the trinity provide the models for the works he produces.

The poetry which the poet transcribes for man is not a fleeting

thing, nor is it unique, according to Emerson: it is timeless, it has always existed in Nature and will always do so, for nature is beauty. The duty of the poet is to transcribe this natural music which he hears, and the keener his ear, the more faithfully he transcribes, the more nearly his poetry will approximate the eternal Truth. Thus, a poem becomes a manifestation of divine energy, just as are deeds; both are external indications of the divine inherent in the Poet or the Doer. The Poet, in transcribing this Truth for his age, is acting in accord with the dictates of the divine in himself.

Emerson emphasizes that a poem, to be truly a poem, must emphasize that communication of thought: "For it is not metres, but a metre-making argument that makes a poem,—a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing." If the thought is worthy, according to Emerson, it will find its own form, one that is best suited to effective communication of the idea without which there would be no poem. Furthermore, Emerson points out that each age requires its own poet, that the eternal and immutable progress of each age over those preceding requires that the experiences of each age be transmitted into Truth and hence, poetry, by a man representative of that age. The poet of the age is the foremost watchman on the peak. When he speaks, "It is the truest word ever spoken, and the phrase will be the fittest, most musical, and the unerring voice of the world for that time." Truth is truth; the poet makes it articulate for his age.

Nature, Emerson says, conspires to aid the Poet in his task by "worthier impulses", by the beauty of things in nature which, when transcribed into poetry, become a "new and higher type of beauty". The Poet's words are images or symbols of nature, which, in turn, is a symbol or image in itself, a representation of the eternal whole. Thus, when we behold a poem, "We stand before the secret of the world, there where Being passes into Appearance and Unity into Variety."

From this point Emerson digresses briefly into the philosophic

basis of his poetic theory: the concept of the oneness or unity of the Universe, both physically and spiritually. Here he supports his contention that the Poet and his work are manifestations of the essentially spiritual reality; the Universe is the physical manifestation of the soul; everything in nature is controlled by a moral power; and anything in nature that is not perceived in this sense is an indication of a deficiency in the observer. The Poet is intuitively aware of this relationship, as are all men, especially those who live close to nature itself or those who employ symbols of any sort for the representation of ideals or emotions. All men, Emerson says, intuitively comprehend the innate relationship of things. Therefore, all men are mystics; all are poets. Each symbol, even each word, is a poem, an expression of the internal kinship of all things, material and spiritual. As he points out, "We are far from having exhausted the significance of the few symbols we use. We can come to use them yet with a terrible simplicity. It does not need that a poem should be long. Every word was once a poem. Every new relation is a new word."

The poet, more intuitively perceptive than the majority of men, points out the common unity of things, re-attaching them to their divine source. Even mundane, ostensibly ugly things may be shown in their true beauty by revealing their divine origin. Primarily the poet does this by his mastery of the use of symbols; through his great perceptive powers he is able to perceive facts not as entities in themselves, but as symbols of the divine in the universe. In his employment of symbols, he is the "Namer or Languagemaker"; he makes words by naming things after their appearance or their essence; he can do this because "he sees it, or comes one step nearer to it than any other". Emerson declares that this is not art; rather, it is a second nature growing out of the first. Nature herself, through the poet, gives voice to the myriad concepts and things which make up its unity. Poetry is, in reality, produced by nature working through the poet. In doing so, nature produces a higher form of the human soul. By analogy, Emerson shows that poetry actually exists in nature. It only remains for the poet to transcribe the idyl of mating birds or the rough ode of a tempest

into words and forms that are intelligible to men less perceiving than the poet.

In doing this, the poet, possessed of "Imagination," actually a form of intuition, is able to draw upon a "great public power", the oversoul or the transcendental source of all things encompassing all things. When under the inspiration of this power, the poet speaks out, free from the confines of the immediate and as a voice of the infinite, for "the mind flows into and through things hardest and highest, and the metamorphosis is possible". Emerson warns, however, that this transcendental state is not to be excited by stimulants but by sunlight, the air, the water, the simple things he finds around him in nature. The poet, when he speaks with the voice of nature, communicates this liberation and exhilaration to other men through the symbols he employs. "The poets are thus liberating gods."

From this liberation and exhilaration comes poetry that will last: "Therefore all books of the imagination endure, all which ascend to that truth that the writer sees nature beneath him, and used it as his exponent. Every verse or sentence possessing this virtue will take care of its own immortality. The religions of the world are the ejaculations of a few imaginative men."

After thus defining the nature and function of poetry and of the poet and their place in the scheme of nature, Emerson turns to an examination of the state of poetry in his own age. The prospect isn't very promising from his transcendental point of view, although, he points out, America itself is a poem demanding expression in the terms that Whitman was to apply to it a scant ten years later in his first edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

Emerson closes his discussion on a note of exhortation, pleading with the prospective poets of his age to come forth, to give voice to whatever it is inside them waiting for release. He promises knowledge of and kinship with the universe in all its myriad forms to whomever fulfills the age's need for a poet.

In the poem "Merlin" Emerson furthers his discussion of what he perceives to be true poetry and the duties of the poet. Basically, it reiterates the position which he expressed in *The Poet*. The poet

is a man mystically inspired; thought is important rather than poetic technique, and a thought worthy of poetic expression will determine its own form. In addition, he points out the futility of writing verse that does not draw its inspiration from the great reservoir of nature in the oversoul. Finally, Emerson justifies poetry by pointing out that it is necessary in the scheme of nature as a counterbalance to the mundane, elevating the soul to new heights.

Emerson's theory of poetic composition is firmly rooted in his transcendental *Weltanschauung*, and his theory of the nature and functions of poetry and the poet fulfill the requirements which both would have to meet in a transcendental world in which the poet would be Man interpreting to his fellow men the phenomena of the universe in all their apparently intricate but in reality simple interrelationships. His poet is not concerned with the technical niceties of poetic expression; rather he is a poet of interpretation and celebration of the world, the flesh, and the spirit, all of which become one in the poem as well as in fact, in mystic communion with the infinite. As a result, the poet is a spokesman for the universe and for his fellow man. He puts into words what others feel through their intuitive knowledge of the aspect of the divine which permeates themselves and all things, but which they are unable to perceive or to understand as thoroughly as does the poet or which they are unable to express as effectively.

His entire thesis agrees with his transcendental philosophy, with its reiteration of the concept of Variety in Unity, and the transcendental nature of man and of things; his emphasis upon the intuitive creative process and the influences of understanding and perception, which, when mystically distilled, produce thought; and especially in his assertion that art, as everything else in life, must be ethical, that its only excuse for being is that it is an expression of the true nature of everything, emphasizing its truth, beauty, and goodness. The poet, in his role as interpreter and spokesman for the universe, must observe and must listen for the mystic voice within himself. Thus inspired, he is free to write.

Especially significant in his theory is the belief that all nature,

including man, is ever striving upward, seeking closer communion with the oversoul. Thus, in the face of this change, this progress, each age must produce its own poets, not because truth and beauty change: they are immutable; but because new experiences impose superficial changes upon the appearance which overlies reality, and these superficialities must be newly interpreted for the age. Therefore, poetry for the most part is fleeting, serving only as inspiration for succeeding generations. Poetry can and does last, however, but he points out that it can only last if it is based on the truths of nature, and the more nearly it approaches ultimate truth, the more nearly it approaches immortality. In this respect, Emerson's definition of poetry is broad; it includes the great religions, language, everything that attempts to resolve apparent chaos of experience into orderly, logical truth which emphasizes the spiritual aspect of things rather than the mere physical.

Edgar Allan Poe's theory of poetry is most clearly defined in *The Philosophy of Composition* and in *The Poetic Principle*. In both essays Poe endeavors to treat the phenomena of literary composition as he has experienced them and as he has deduced their meaning and relative importance by examining the works of others. As a result, in the two works he expresses a body of theory that may be effectively compared with the transcendental theory advanced by Ralph Waldo Emerson in *The Poet*.

The Philosophy of Composition uses the writing of "The Raven" as a basis for expounding the theory Poe finds behind the act of composition itself. In the essay Poe commences with a discussion of the necessity that the author know where he is going before putting pen to paper. In the case of a work of fiction, the author must constantly have the denouement in view in order to direct the work toward the end which it is supposed to attain. This, he says, is contrary to the widely-held view that a writer writes from a thesis, or theme, constructing the work as he writes so that it elaborates upon that theme.

Poe states that his own preferred point of departure is an effect which he wants the completed work to have upon the reader. This preconceived effect—original, of course—is the controlling factor

used by the poet in the course of composition. Prior to that, however, Poe ascertains that his chosen effect is both novel and vivid; then he determines which techniques or devices may best be employed to achieve the effect he has decided upon. In this instance, he asserts that composition for him is an intellectual act rather than a fit of mystical and irrational inspiration. Poe declares that the creative act is a process of trial and error, of "cautious selections and rejections".

In further illustrating his theory of composition, Poe elects to describe the method which he employed in writing "The Raven", describing step by step the process which resulted in the finished work. In doing so, Poe declares that he intends to prove that the act of literary composition, far from being an intuitive or inspired process, is actually a mechanical process comparable to the solution of a mathematical problem—precise, direct, with foreseeable result.

Poe commences with the statement that he determined to write a poem "that should suit at once the popular and critical taste". Following this, the next point he considered was the problem of length. For totality of effect, he says that a work must be of such a length that it may be read at one sitting; otherwise, it loses much of its quality of unity and becomes more than one poem, with more than one effect. As illustration of this point, he cites "Paradise Lost". Unity of effect, he avers, imposes a rigid limitation upon the length of any literary work, with the exception of prose works such as *Robinson Crusoe,* in which unity is not an important factor. In respect to the limitations imposed by the need for unity, Poe states that length can be determined through a mathematical ratio : ". . . brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect". Thus, he decided upon a length of about one hundred lines for "The Raven."

Next, he states, the matter of the effect he desired to obtain was considered, and he chose Beauty—"the excitement, or pleasurable elevation of the soul". He rejects "Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart", because these may be more effectively communicated in

prose. Beauty, he says, is the true province of poetry, and although Truth and Passion may be introduced into a poem, they must be veiled in Beauty. Following this, he selected a tone of sadness for the poem, because "Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones".

Following this, he states that he sought "some artistic piquancy" which would serve as a point around which he could construct the poem. He decided upon the use of a refrain because he could utilize it for effect by varying its application while the refrain itself remained unchanged. For a refrain easily varied in application, he decided to use one word, and, after determining the precise effect which sound combinations would provoke, he decided upon "Nevermore" because of the sonorous quality of the long "o" in combination with the "r's". The use of the refrain naturally indicated to him that the poem would be divided into stanzas.

By following the same logical process of examining alternative choices and accepting or rejecting in terms of what he had already selected, Poe decided upon the use of a raven as the speaker of the refrain, the topic of the death of a beautiful woman, and the occasion of a lamenting lover. By combining these factors, he determined the climax of the poem—"that query to which 'Nevermore' should be in the last place an answer—that in reply to which this word 'Nevermore' should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair." At this point he first put pen to paper and wrote the climactic—nearly the last—stanza of the poem. From here, it was a matter of deciding upon the versification of the poem and the actual incidents which the poem describes. These were decided upon by the same logical process of examination of possibilities in relationship to what had already been determined as suitable for the poem. When the remaining requirements were satisfied, the details of the poem suggested themselves, and the poem emerged as a completed work.

A significant factor which Poe inserts almost inconsequentially is the matter of handling of the selected material. It must be properly and skillfully adapted to the work, and it must contain "some undercurrents, however indefinite, of meaning". The latter,

he points out, imparts richness to a work of art. However, he warns, this undercurrent of meaning must never become foremost or appear in excess. This "turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind) the so called poetry of the so called transcendentalists". In the light of the need for this carefully-controlled undercurrent of meaning, the last two stanzas of "The Raven" were written to add an emblematical note to the poem, giving the reader, finally, an insight into the ultimate meaning of the poem.

Poe amplifies his theory of poetic composition in *The Poetic Principle*, which had its origin as a lecture that he delivered in the last years before his death. In this essay, Poe states that his purpose is to use several poems of other authors as illustrations of his own poetic taste. In commencing, he states categorically that a poem must be short; indeed he states again, as he did in *The Philosophy of Composition* that a long poem does not exist. A poem is only worthy of the name because it excites by elevating the soul, and this, he states, cannot be maintained for long; hence, a long work cannot be called a poem because of this lack. For this reason, he points out again that *Paradise Lost* cannot be considered a poem because it lacks this unity of effect. In addition, he states that the epic form itself, for this reason, is based upon "an imperfect sense of art". Any work, he says, must not be considered meritorious because of its sheer weight or bulk. Equally important in this respect is the fact that a poem may be too short.

After illustrating the latter principle, Poe considers what he calls "the heresy of The Didactic", which states that the proper end of poetry is Truth. Not so, says Poe. Poetry and Truth are oils and waters. Truth is precise and severe; it is a paradox to clothe Truth in the "gems and flowers of poetic language".

The mind, Poe says, has three characteristics: The Pure Intellect, Taste, and the Moral Sense. The Intellect is concerned with Truth, the Moral Sense with duty, and Taste, significantly in the middle, is concerned solely with the Beautiful. Thus, Taste is the most effective means of combatting Vice because it displays Beauty in contrast to the ugliness of evil. Therefore, Beauty is the proper

end of poetry or of other art forms.

Poe then defines poetry as "The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty"; it has no concern, except incidentally, with Duty or Truth. The rest of the essay is based upon this concept, which he illustrates by citing poems which he felt were illustrative of the basic principle. In each instance, Poe is concerned with one thing: the aesthetic. Poetry to him must be primarily aesthetic in nature. If any work is not, then it is not poetry. Poe's poetic principle, then, is simple but exclusive, a rational approach to the emotion of beauty, if such a paradox is possible. All other aspects grow out of this, as he has indicated in both essays.

Briefly, then, he claimed that Beauty rather than Truth was the proper end of poetry, that the true poetic principle was aspiration in words and rhythm for supernal beauty. A poem must, in order to accomplish this, be short and unified, but not didactic; it should create rhythmical beauty; it should elevate the soul; it should be melancholic in its beauty. Thus, to Poe, the end of all poetry was beauty; and subject matter, attitude, and techniques must all be devoted to the attainment of this aesthetic end.

In looking at the poetic theories of both Emerson and Poe side by side, the first impression is, of course, one of contrast, because the two are diametrically opposed in the very basis of the philosophies upon which each has constructed his poetic theory. Emerson's poetic theory is transcendental, as is his theory of poetry. As such, it emphasizes the mystical aspect of composition, in which the poet writes under the influence of his intuitive communion with the oversoul; his poetry is, therefore, an extension of the source of all truth, and the work which he produces is the essence of truth. Poetic form is relatively unimportant, as are techniques. Form and techniques will be determined intuitively, and they will be naturally adapted to the best expression of the truth which is the soul as well as the subject matter of the poem. Thus, Emerson's poet is a lover and perceiver of the ultimate truth in the unity of soul and matter lying behind the seemingly unrelated variety in nature. The poet, to Emerson, is the communicator to man of the ultimate Truth. Poetry is the communication;

it is a "metre-making argument" which has for its end the ethical aspect of art.

Poe, on the other hand, bases his poetic theory upon the love of the beautiful, and his theory of poetry is actually an aesthetic theory which emphasizes Beauty rather than Emerson's Truth. In order to attain Beauty in poetry, Poe advocates a rational, mechanistic approach to composition, contrasting sharply with Emerson's intuitive approach. To Poe, matters of subject matter and techniques are extremely important because they contribute to the attainment of beauty. Hence, they must be carefully and rationally chosen with that end in mind. This, of course, is the antithesis of Emerson's belief that these matters would take care of themselves.

Beauty, Poe states, is the proper end of poetry. The end of Truth, as advocated by Emerson, he dismisses as didacticism. All matters of poetry must be conceived rationally and deliberately to achieve the end of beauty; poetry is not composed by the intuitive perception of Truth, but by the rational search for Beauty. When Beauty is attained, the poet has produced poetry. Emerson, on the other hand, seeks Truth mystically communicated by the infinite. When this is attained, the poet spontaneously writes Truth.

Both concede that the poet is an inspired man and that poetry should elevate the soul, but at once their paths diverge. Emerson's theory is transcendental; Poe's is aesthetic. Where Emerson advocates the ethical, Poe stresses the beautiful. Emerson sought a union of truth and art; for Poe, art alone was the supreme goal.

CHAPTER V

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR: EMERSON'S CONCEPT OF THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE

The American Scholar, an address delivered by Ralph Waldo Emerson before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard on August 31, 1837, was not the first demand for American independence from European domination in literature and in thinking, but it remains the most eloquent, the most rational, and the most memorable. As Emerson points out early in the oration, "Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close", and America, he points out, can and must produce something that is "better than the exertions of mechanical skill". Furthermore, just as the changing universe calls for a new pole star in response to the demands of time and space, so does the world await the emergence of a new and great literary age provided by America.

In commencing his discussion of what he sees to be the necessary intellectual philosophy for the American Scholar, Emerson first points out that from antiquity, the necessary duties of the human race have been parcelled out to individuals in order that the work of society might be done as efficiently and economically as possible.

Behind the fable which has been constructed to explain his social fact, Emerson sees an eternal truth: that there is One Man rather than many men; that something or some phase of this One Man is found in each individual; and that society as a whole makes up the One Man. This truth implies, according to Emerson, that the individual must periodically return from his particular assignment in society and embrace all men in order to know and possess himself. In modern society, with its delegation of its countless duties to individuals, this truth and its ensuing implication have been lost. "The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk and strut about so many walking monsters—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man."

As a result, Man becomes many things: a farmer, a tradesman, a mechanic. Hence, the individual is not aware of his true position in the structure of One Man, and he becomes the slave of his particular function. Because of this defect in society, Emerson points out that the individual is seldom aware of, or cheered by, the role assigned to him for the good of the One Man of which he is a part. Hence, he is deprived of the basic dignity which is merited by his contribution to the whole of Man.

In the delegation of duties to the individual, Emerson points out that the scholar is the intellect of society, and in this lies a real danger. The scholar in the right kind of society is *Man Thinking*, whereas in a degenerate society, he becomes a mere thinker, or worse, a parrot of other men's thinking. In a true society, which is aware of the oneness of Man and of the necessity for the individual to remain aware of his function as Man performing a specific duty for the good of all, the scholar is truly *Man Thinking;* he is the embodiment of all men or One Man, and his office is the determination and dissemination of knowledge. The central theme of the oration is this concept of *Man Thinking*, and to develop this theme, Emerson discusses the influences upon the scholar and the duties inherent in the scholar's role as *Man Thinking*.

There are three major influences upon the scholar as *Man*

Thinking, Emerson points out, and of these influences, the first and most important is Nature. The relationship that exists between the scholar and Nature is complex, for Nature has no beginning or end; rather it is the web of God, circular power returning always to itself. The scholar must learn from Nature by examining, by classifying, and most of all, by determining the countless relationships between the myriad apparent entities that the scholar beholds in nature.

Science, he points out, "is nothing but the finding of analogy, identity, in the most remote parts". When he does this, the scholar, in his role as Man Thinking, will learn that Nature and his own soul are opposites, perfectly complementary. To the old maxim, "Know thyself", Emerson adds, "Study Nature".

The second major influence upon the scholar is the mind of the past, in which Emerson includes books, literature, art, and institutions. Books he regards as the best influence because they represent life which has been in many cases, distilled into the approximation of truth. But none is quite perfect, he points out. The books of the past do not represent absolute truth for the present. Each age must write its own books; it must attempt to distill its own life into truth.

Furthermore, Emerson sees the act of creation as sacred; the created object is not sacred, nor is the creator. He points out the danger that veneration may be attached to the object itself, accepting it as absolute authority, or to the creator, even to the point where he becomes a demi-god.

When the scholar succumbs to this danger, he degenerates into a bookworm, accepting books as such, disregarding any connection they may or may not have with nature and humanity. Books, Emerson says, are not for veneration; they are for inspiration. Their only function is to inspire *Man Thinking* to do his utmost in the present. *Man Thinking* has the prime duty of creative thinking, in which reading plays a vital part, but Emerson warns that the regard for books and for reading must never become an end in itself.

In the creative act, or the act of perceiving and uttering truth,

Emerson sees the need for progress, for a steady progression. The scholar and scholarly institutions must not look to the past; they must look forward; they must create. Veneration of the past inhibits or even destroys the creative act, and the over-influence of past genius is equally destructive. The past has its value as inspiration, he points out in citing Chaucer, Marvell, and Dryden, but it also has its dangers, for which he cites the "Shakespearized" English poetic drama.

A certain amount of reading is essential to the scholar, but it must be creative reading, the reading for truth, and, of course, reading in order to gain specific information. Thus, he ends his discussion of the influence of the past with a note of warning directed at colleges and universities. He points out that they must not drill, but create, in their teaching of fundamentals, and that they must remember "thought and knowledge are natures in which apparatus and pretension avail nothing".

The third major influence upon the scholar is Action, or more simply, life. "Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential", Emerson asserts because "The world,—this shadow of the soul or *other me*,—lies wide around". The scholar cannot isolate himself from life because he must know it, and to know it, he must participate in it. The scholar learns to know life by experience; "Drudgery, calamity, exasperation, want, are instructors in eloquence and wisdom", and, in addition, action is the material out of which the mind mystically distills thought; therefore, action is essential to performing the duty of *Man Thinking*.

The scholar derives many benefits from action in addition to accumulating the raw materials of thought. Action indulged in returns wisdom in proportion to the effort put forth; it provides a "dictionary" of insight into men and things as well as into the language of life. In addition, it is a resource; serving as the reservoir of nature, it is symbolic of the ebb and flow of the universe. Therefore, in order to know the laws of nature and hence of the spirit which the principle of Undulation in nature embodies, it is essential that the scholar participates in the necessary labor or life. Thinking and acting are complementary; "Thinking is the

function. Living is the functionary." Life serves not only as a source of replenishment for the scholar; but it also serves as a refuge, wherein the scholar may find himself able to live the truth if he is unable to propagate it.

After discussing these influences which are essential to the full development of the scholar as *Man Thinking*, Emerson then defines the duties of the scholar. Self-trust is essential to carrying out the scholar's duties because his tasks are difficult and often unpopular. The scholar's office is "to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances", and the man who attacks or disproves popular myths is often attacked himself. Likewise, the scholar must persevere in his seeking for knowledge, forsaking acclaim for immediate results in order to record, collate, and distill facts into enduring truths. In the face of hostility, he must rely on himself, and he must direct himself toward those long-range goals, all the while listening for the voice of Reason within himself.

In order to perform these duties, the scholar must live as his life demands, accepting difficulties, poverty, and solitude, if necessary, for his duty is to serve as the eye and the heart of the world; he is to observe the men and events of his time, to understand them, and to pass on what he learns to his fellow men. But most of all, he is to distinguish between appearance and reality, always being careful not to fall into the trap of mistaking appearance for reality. Furthermore, he must pass on this knowledge, whether it is popular or not.

In order to carry out these ends, the scholar must be both free and brave; indeed, if he is truly *Man Thinking*, the scholar will instinctively put both fear and servitude behind him and become truly a great man. In this instance Emerson accepts the truism that without great men there can be no great things, and to be great, the scholar must know himself and trust himself. All too often, Emerson points out, men fail to know or to trust themselves, and as a result they degenerate into the herd, into the mass. Thus, Emerson anticipates the mass market and mass culture theories of modern advertising and of suburbia, both present-day

manifestations of the materialism which he proceeds to denounce. Men in the mass are blinded by power and money, two aspects of life which are dreams rather than reality, and in a state of somnabulance, men seek those ends, mistaking the gold of the world for the gold of the spirit. The scholar can wake man from this sleepwalking state, point out to him what is true, and aid him in following the path of true Culture, the path which terminates in the end of all men—the point wherein each man becomes part of Man, knowing and understanding all men, the point at which he comprehends the "one soul which animates all men".

From here, Emerson proceeds to examine his own age, characterizing it as the Reflective or Philosophical era, the age in which man examines himself and his nearby surroundings and finds much insight and knowledge in doing so. In this, he sees man finding vigor and life in the common rather than the rare and in the nearby rather than the remote. Behind all these everyday familiarities, Emerson sees the truth of the spirit and the eternal laws of nature which man can perceive if he examines closely enough. And with the perception of these truths, Emerson believes that man will see that the world has order, form, and unity; that behind the world lies the grand design which God has constructed, embracing everything in an apparently intricate but in reality simple whole. The great writers of his age, those whom we call romantics today, Emerson sees as pioneers pointing the way toward the eventual acceptance of the idea of the oneness of all things. In this passage, Emerson sees in the mundane the microcosm of the eternal, and he avers again that behind the mask of appearance, reality lies waiting. He states that men of his own age are piercing that mask of reality; he implies that other men, too, can do so if they are willing to dedicate themselves to the task.

In the rise of democracy, Emerson believes, the scholar will find a political climate conducive to these tasks which lie before him, for in a state where each man is an individual, given strength and dignity by his very individuality, the scholar can act in accord with his peculiar nature. In a democratic society, the scholar can and must take upon himself the task of collating the contributions

of the past, the abilities of the present, and the hope of the future. He must recognize that the world is nothing, the man is all, for, as Emerson points out, the man contains within himself the law of nature and the seat of Reason, and the scholar must apply the latter to the former. To know all, he must dare all. This, he states, is the task of the American Scholar: he must work, he must study; he must accept the inspiration of "the Divine Soul which inspires all men".

The American Scholar, then, may be summed up as Emerson's plea for dedication on the part of those to whom America must look for its intellectual leadership, because Emerson sees in the scholar the only sourceof strong opposition to the cult of materialism which even in his day posed a severe threat to the spiritual and the intellectual nature of man. If, as Emerson points out, the scholar sees himself as *Man Thinking*, performing a vital service that no one but he can render to his fellow man, then there is no danger that the scholar will be tempted to forsake his duties or to accept the goals of the materialistic world. As long as the scholar regards himself as *Man Thinking* and acts accordingly, there is hope for the entire race of men.

Many of the points which Emerson makes in *The American Scholar* are reiterations or amplifications of the philosophy which he expresses in *Nature*. Perhaps the most obvious and the most significant of these is the concept of Unity, which Emerson sees embracing all of Nature, all of what we regard as the physical universe, and all that we consider to be spiritual or intellectual. Indeed, everything is part of the great whole which he terms "the web of God".

The emphasis upon the world of nature as a source of information and inspiration is an amplification of similar expressions in the essay *Nature;* regarding the physical manifestations of nature as outward indications of or keys to the underlying universal laws of God, he is at once a son of the eighteenth century Age of the Enlightenment and he is a Romantic Idealist, combining the older concept of law and order in Nature with the new concepts of the spiritual kinship between the individual and the world of which

he is a part. In the process, he accepts from the past what is valid for his age, but, regarding it as a source of information and inspiration rather than eternal truth, he constructs a new system of philosophy upon it, thus providing documentation for his stated opinion of the position of the past in the scholar's present.

Another significant aspect of the relationship of this essay to *Nature* is his distinction between appearance and reality. In each, he regards physical phenomena as outward manifestations of underlying spiritual reality. He sees the world as a shadow of the soul, the "other me", which must be accepted as indicative of the truth but not as the truth itself. For the eternal truth, the truth of the spirit, man must look beneath and beyond these physical phenomena for the laws which relate man to man and man to God.

In *The American Scholar*, then, just as in *Nature*, Emerson sees the basic kinship of the world of matter and of spirit, of the apparently finite and the almighty infinite, all bound together by principles that are eternal and immutable. In *The American Scholar* he assigns to the scholar the role of determining these principles and of promulgating what he learns, for the edification of all men. In the essay *Nature* he sets forth a general philosophy; in terms that make specific reference to its application by a group of men who, Emerson believes, can not only profit by what he tells them, but who can show tangible results if they apply the abstract theory.

CHAPTER VI

EDGAR ALLAN POE'S LITERARY THEORY AND PRACTICE

Ligeia is outstanding among Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic tales of terror and the supernatural both because it represents the heights to which the short story can be carried in the hands of a master storyteller and because it illustrates so completely Poe's ability to co-ordinate subject matter, attitudes, and technique in order to construct a compelling atmosphere that rises and intensifies continuously from the first line of the story to its culmination in the last. In exhibiting such complete control, the story displays tangible evidence that Poe's literary philosophy, expressed in both *The Poetic Principle* and *The Philosophy of Composition*, is not mere words; rather, the theory and its practice coincide quite closely, as an examination of the story in the light of Poe's critical works shows quite clearly. Furthermore, such a comparison indicates that Poe's emphasis upon the importance of unity in a creative work is the keystone of his entire literary rationale. In the essays he emphasizes that unity of all elements in a work is essential, and in *Ligeia* he demonstrates how effective a story can be when subject matter, attitudes, and techniques are carefully subordinated

to a preconceived, totally unified effect.

In *Ligeia*, Poe uses two similar incidents and two similar settings as the framework upon which he has constructed his story. The incidents are serious, tragic, and, according to *The Philosophy of Composition*, beautiful, for he uses the deaths of two beautiful women as the focal points of the story. Each of the women has been married to the narrator, who is the connecting link and the unifying character in the story. The fact that the women are beautiful, that they die in parallel circumstances, and that neither emerges as an individual but rather as vague, ill-defined forms suggesting rather than illustrating beauty are further factors which Poe has utilized in the framework of subject matter in order to give his story form and a narrative flow. Then, too, he has selected two settings, essentially similar in the decadence of their splendor, in order to further the unifications of the story. The first setting, that in which Ligeia dies, is splendid and decaying but lacking in vivid description; the second, an ancient abbey, restored to the psuedo-oriental splendor of an opium addict's dream, is more sharply defined. In the description, however, Poe utilizes the eye and the mind of the narrator to convey the impression that although physical locale has changed, the settings are in fact essentially alike in their exotic, mysterious, unreal splendor. The narrator, a man with a strong appreciation of the sensually beautiful, and Legeia, a woman who is dark, mysterious, exotic herself, imply that the first setting is complimentary to themselves; the second setting, vividly described, is obviously an attempt on the part of the narrator to recapture something that has fled with the spirit of Ligeia.

The subject matter, then, is romantic, far-away and exotic. Like a fragile orchid, it has an aura of decadence, of life in death, that makes the people and places as well as the incidents in the story unreal. Throughout there is an air of vagueness that diffuses the appearance of character, setting, and incidents into a total impression of atmosphere rather than a visual image. Poe has elected to use subject matter that not only can be subordinated to the total effect which he stresses as important; but he has

selected subject matter which, because of its remoteness and unreality, subordinates itself to the unity of the total story.

Poe's basic attitude in his critical essays is that Beauty is the highest goal to which a creative work can aspire. In *Ligeia*, this attitude is very much in evidence. Poe's idea of beauty is not sensual, nor is it intellectual, but, as demonstrated in *The Philosophy of Composition*, it is an emotional beauty made up of regret resulting from the intuitive perception of the transitory quality of life. He finds his beauty in transience rather than in the absolute; in the unknowable rather than the attainable; in the abstract awareness of beauty in form and music rather than its concrete perception in a photograph or a lyric. In *Ligeia*, this concept of beauty is displayed in the story as a whole and in the narrative which flows directly to its end. This is especially true in the descriptions of the women in the story. Poe states that they, and especially Ligeia, are beautiful. Yet the physical descriptions which he provides do not confirm this, especially, again, in the case of Ligeia. She is not described as a woman but as a vision or an ideal and as unreal as either. Her beauty, according to the description does not exist in fact nor does it exist in the narrator's reason. Rather, it exists in his intuitive perception of it, somewhere in the recesses of his mind. Poe says of her face, "It was the radiance of an opium-dream—an airy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine than the phantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos." Surely, no such beauty was ever perceived by man's eye or his reason.

Another significant idea expressed in the critical essays is the importance of unity of effect in a work of literary art, and in *Ligeia* this principle is especially obvious. Poe has declared in the essays that the author should determine the effect which he wishes to impress upon his readers and then subordinate everything in the work to that end. In *Ligeia* Poe maintains a mood which is subordinate to that effect—the impression of the unreal that is made startlingly and horrifyingly real. He commences with an air of mystery; he ends on the same note, but in a much higher octave. In the process he has maintained the air of unreality that

is at the same time real, and he does this by a variety of carefully-controlled techniques which will be discussed later in the essay. They combine to form the final united effect—one which is at once rejected by the reason and accepted by the race-old fear of and belief in the unknown.

Equally important among Poe's beliefs is that Beauty may only be achieved by a rational search for it on the part of the artist, and this attitude, too, is exemplified in *Ligeia*. Poe's concept of beauty in this instance is his over-all effect, and in the story the most outstanding feature of it is the congruity of the whole. Only a writer continually aware of the end for which he is striving is capable of such control; in the story, nothing is out of place; characters, setting, incidents, and detail are in harmony. The material is subordinate to the writer rather than the reverse. Only a man who is willing to keep the complexities of a narrative under such control is capable of achieving the unity that the story displays. Hence, Poe demonstrates that the writer must exercise intellectual control over the material with which he is working.

In the techniques which Poe utilized in constructing *Ligeia* the most obvious and most significant application of his rationale of composition may be seen. The techniques he employs are especially important in demonstrating that his belief in Beauty as a goal and unity and reason as tools with which to achieve it is a valid rationale, and that rigid control of the myriad details in a literary work is essential to effectiveness.

Poe's basic technique is a straight-forward narrative style, told in the first person from a viewpoint which presumably has the perspective permitted by the elapse of a long period of time. Coupled with this from the very beginning is the air of mystery essential to both the story and the effect. Ligeia is, in effect, a dream, so at once she is rejected as unreal by the reader's mind, and at the same time, because she is intangible and exotic, the reader suspends disbelief because all things are possible in a dream. This double effect is exploited by Poe in his description of her and of the ethereal rather than sensual image of her which exists in the narrator's mind as he recalls her and their life together.

In keeping with this is the emphasis upon Ligeia's emotional and intellectual nature. Externally calm, she is inwardly a seething mass of powerful emotion. As befits a dream woman, she is capable of heights of passion no other woman can attain. Coupled with this are intense intellectual power and great learning, not in pragmatic skills, but in the complexities of abstract reasoning. Poe paints an image of a woman's soul and mind rather than her body, a woman whom one instinctively fears and at the same time is compulsively attracted to. She is capable of heights and depths of reason and will and emotion that others, living in a mundane rather than a dream world, can scarcely imagine. In this section of the story, setting is subordinate to Ligeia; in fact, Ligeia herself becomes the setting, and the locale is a reflection of her.

Her death is sudden and yet inevitable. A dream cannot endure, and the dreamer must awaken. Even as she dies, however, Poe emphasizes the importance of the strength of will and of Ligeia's will in particular. Upon her death, the scene shifts; the new setting is exotic, decadent, fantastic, just as Ligeia was in life. Lady Rowena, the new wife, is pale and insignificant in comparison. Still Ligeia dominates the mind of the narrator, and, of course, the mind of the reader. Even though dead and entombed far away, Poe thus makes her presence felt—in a shadow, a sudden gust of wind, in a few drops of liquid—and always in that recess of the narrator's mind that gives him no rest. This is contrived so effectively that at the end one knows what the outcome will be, knows that it is impossible, and at the same time, accepts it as both possible and logical.

Poe's technique in bringing about this result is that of verisimilitude. He has rejected an approach that reflects the real world in favor of a world of his own so carefully constructed that it takes on the dimensions of the real world. Yet at the same time he injects a device that serves the double function of adding to the verisimilitude of his world and of making a concession to the reason of the reader: the narrator is an opium-addict. He is undergoing a steady, perceptible process of mental degeneration. Where does the reality lie? Does it exist in fact or in the hazy glow

of the opium pipe? Poe provides no answer. His only clues lie in the first paragraph and the last, and they are not emphasized. They are there as part of the overall atmosphere of the story, and yet they are there. The mind of the narrator is admittedly dim as a result of much suffering; he shrieks as he beholds the Lady Ligeia. Where, then, does reality lie, and where the Lady Ligeia?

The story *Ligeia*, then, is a reiteration of Poe's philosophy of literary composition; he has set out to construct a work that is complete and unified in itself and yet one that has overtones and implications far beyond the mere physical length of the story. The careful choice of material and the rigid control of details as well as the exposition of the intricate interrelationships of both material and detail are all in accord with the literary theories as set forth in both *The Philosophy of Composition* and *The Poetic Principle*. Although there are many other literary theories extant and valid, Poe demonstrates that his is as capable of successful application as any other.

CHAPTER VII

TO THE NEW RENAISSANCE: THE BEGINNINGS OF REALISM IN AMERICA

Out of the chaos of sectionalism, Civil War, and rapidly increasing industrialism in America there arose, in the years between 1870 and 1910, the currents that gave shape to an intensified sense of national identity that came a bit closer to the ideal of a hundred years before and at the same time gave impetus to attempts to redefine the American experience in the light of a drastically altered environment. Both American literature and the American experience, as we have seen them in the pre-Civil War years, were essentially Eastern, centering in areas that had a history of two hundred years and that reflected a simple and rural environment. But the post-Civil War years brought changes so profound that they altered forever the kind of society that had made romantic idealism possible and brought into being a dynamic society fused of frontier and industrialism, both harsh, both firmly rooted in this world, and both demanding an entirely new kind of literary expression.

Actually, in Melville we catch the first glimpses of the new expression as the impetus of new, embryonic ideas made it im-

possible for him to solve the problem of evil, apparently triumphant, in a world that had lost the vision of God that had stirred the romantics so deeply. The reasons for this sudden, harsh, and frightening manifestation of evil are many, some of them peculiarly American, such as the slavery controversy, and others as a result of the intellectual, social, and economic upheaval that swept the Western world in the middle of the nineteenth century as a result of the industrial revolution and the rise of the new science. By the middle 1850's romanticism in America was for all practical purposes dead as an intellectual and literary movement, although the so-called genteel writers such as Longfellow and Holmes maintained their popularity, and Whitman, a late but perennial romantic, came into prominence.

Much—in my estimation too much—has been made of the influences of French realism, especially of Balzac, on the beginnings of the American realistic movement. There is, of course, a relationship, as there is in all cross-cultural movements, but I suspect that much of the relationship is often not a case of influences but of the same forces operating in different localities that are nevertheless part of a closely-related cultural complex, as is certainly the case with the United States and Western Europe. In the realistic movement in America in the second half of the nineteenth century, the peculiarities of an intensified national consciousness, a period of intensely emotional and destructive soul-searching in the Civil War, the competition between the agrarian and industrial ideologies, the sheer physical as well as psychological influence of an expanding frontier, and the beginnings of a battle between fundamental religious orthodoxy and the new science were all peculiarly American factors that demanded a new philosophical synthesis and literary expression, neither of which could be found within the framework of romantic idealism.

Consequently, by 1860 the romantics had in fact, if not in practice, admitted their intellectual inadequacy, and the national uncertainty of the 1860's is a tangible manifestation of a much more profound intellectual dilemma that forced many American writers, including Melville, to withdraw. At the same time it

made possible a new examination of the fundamentals of the American experience by younger writers who, although they were unable to articulate either the inadequacies of romanticism or the dilemma itself, nevertheless began instinctively to explore and use what they believed were new subject matters and more valid literary techniques.

The first consequences of this new search has become known as the local color movement, a tentative realignment of literary expression that, without a philosophical foundation, came briefly to dominate American writing during the 1870's. It is important to note that during the last half of the nineteenth century, the period in which the new directions finally evolved, American poetry was, with the major exceptions of Emily Dickinson, Sidney Lanier, and Walt Whitman, both unimportant and insignificant. The local color movement and the new realism that succeeded it found most of their expression in prose fiction. This is true for two major reasons: first, because the new subject matters and techniques, as unrefined as they were, were hardly suitable for poetic expression, and secondly because the literary sophistication necessary for writing true poetry was simply not a part of the intellectual equipment of the new writers, many of them products of the frontier, whose only major literary medium was a rough and ready variety of journalism.

These new young writers knew two things very well. They knew the areas of the country from whence they came, and they knew the people out of whom they sprung. Intuitively they turned to these sources for the substance of their work, in the process pointing out the direction that the new realism would take. Local color was essentially regional literature that emphasized three major geographical areas, the New England that had largely been bypassed by national development, the Old South that was beginning its postwar construction of the Southern myth, and the West that has largely become synonymous with the American myth that dominates the conscious of the world today. Of the three, the West has had the most far-reaching influences on American and world writing as well as on the stereotype of America; conse-

quently, the Western local colorists provide useful illustrations for our generalizations.

Brett Harte, a product of the East, shaped and made aware by the demands of a brawling, dynamic frontier mining society, is typical of the local colorists who found nationwide followings. Born in Albany, New York, in 1836, he moved to California in the boom days before he was twenty, and after following his luck at the mines, he turned to journalism in San Francisco and quickly became the voice of his time and region. His best short stories, published in the *Overland Monthly* between 1868 and 1870 and later collected in *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches* (1870) are typical of what the local colorists were doing. In the title story, in "The Outcasts of Poker Flat", and in "Tennessee's Partner", the best of the collection, Harte turned first to characters and setting, rejecting for the most part the cliches of life as the idealist would have it to describe life as he found it to be. Consequently, his characters are typical of the mining camps—miners, gamblers, prostitutes, hangers-on; their speech is as nearly lifelike as nineteenth century morality would accept; and their motivations have their origins in their character portrayals. In spite of a too-frequent refuge in sentimentality, a tendency to melodramatize, and a propensity to wax eloquent over the beauties of nature, Harte broke new ground in both subject matter and technique and in the process turned literary attention to matters of everyday life graphically and dramatically portrayed; together with others like Edward Eggleston in the Midwest, Joel Chandler Harris in the South, and Sarah Orne Jewett in New England, he was responsible for an increased attention to the surface of everyday life that was to culminate in the works of Mark Twain, Henry James, and William Dean Howells, forcing a major turning point in American writing and providing the foundations for the new American literary renaissance of the twentieth century.

The major shortcoming of local color can be found in the very elements that gave it its strength and direction: the subject matter of life and the technical attempts to reproduce it. This lay in the fact that the local colorists were unable to find a rationale for the

new movement, and their works are consequently picturesque, often of documentary value, frequently interesting, but ultimately unsatisfying. Without a purpose, without a foundation in thought, and perhaps because of limitations in the talents and insight of the writers, it could hardly be other than a temporary movement, important primarily as the immediate background out of which American realism, in the years between 1870 and 1890, was to emerge, consolidate itself, come to terms with the new materialism, and dominate the twentieth century.

Mark Twain, Howells, and James, all of them firmly rooted in the subject matter and techniques of the local colorists, are those who brought realism into being in America, who gave it direction, and who, in response to Whitman's call, made a new national literature out of the diversity and the uncertainty that was at the heart of local color. The contribution of each of the three, both in their individual works and collectively, to American literature is tremendous, so great, in fact, that if America had, by 1900, produced the national literature that it sought for more than a century, the heart of it must lie in the works of these men who collectively approach the American ideal and the American reality more closely than any of their predecessors. But at the same time, and more importantly, these are the men who made American literature an international literature in scope, in depth, and in total impact.

Although a great many partisans, especially of James, will disagree violently, I feel safe in asserting that the greatest of the three is Mark Twain. The first major American writer to be born on the frontier, in 1835, he was also the first to distinguish the difference between the American ideal, as it had been formulated in the eighteenth century, and the American reality, as it came into being in the nineteenth. Mark Twain has a unique place in American literary history as the first great writer to have grown up on the idyllic pre-Civil War frontier, in a world that was doomed to die at the hands of industrialism and the war itself. The world that he had known so well was one of simplicity and honesty, a place where a free existence was possible until the

postwar years, and Mark Twain was for a long time its only writer-spokesman.

This early Mark Twain, writing of a rapidly vanishing attitude toward life, was the author of *Innocents Abroad* (1869), *Roughing It* (1872), and the other works that early in his career established an unshakeable reputation as a humorist. But, beginning with *The Gilded Age* (1873), a collaboration with C. D. Warner, a new and bitter Mark Twain began to emerge, a Mark Twain who suddenly realized that the idyllic life had been destroyed by the forces of materialism and who determined to turn his humor into satire in order to denounce it. Satire, however, proved fruitless; biting as it was, it was still considered humor, so, between 1876 and 1884, he turned to another technique, the technique of re-creating the vanished past. In so doing he produced his greatest works, the solid core upon which his reputation will always rest.

These are *Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), a series of books that must be considered a trilogy. Although the three share a common subject matter, the idyllic pre-Civil War existence on the Mississippi River, they show an increasingly deep and ultimately hopeless understanding, not merely of that period, but of all of human life. The first of the three, *Tom Sawyer*, recaptures in sharp, nostalgic detail the idyllic existence itself as it manifests itself in the simple life of a boy during his last innocent summer before adolescence. Firmly based in reality, including all the horrors and fears of childhood, nevertheless, these evils are transcended so that they become the shadow fears of childhood, to be dissipated like mist as the sun breaks out of the clouds. In effect, in *Tom Sawyer* Mark Twain created not the world of the frontier but a world that has never existed except in the minds of those adults who seek to escape from a harshly demanding present into a past that is secure and happy. For Mark Twain it was pure escapism, but like any attempt to deny the present, it provided only temporary respite, although he was to attempt to return in a number of works in the future.

Actually, *Life on the Mississippi* was, at first, an earlier attempt

to return to the past. Part of it, a series of sketches entitled "Old Times on the Mississippi", had been published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1875; returning in fact rather than mere fancy to the Mississippi in 1883, Mark Twain combined a series of essays from the new experience with those based on the old to make the book. The first half of the book, based on the past, has the quality and magic of much of *Tom Sawyer;* its nostalgic poetic quality and sense of strength and freedom contrast strongly with the more subdued, sober account of the present in the second half.

But this return in fact as well as fancy to the Mississippi River in order to bridge the gap between fact and fancy was directly responsible for the writing of *Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain's greatest work, his true bridge between past and present, and his most acute, undistorted view of the ultimate nature of life. In writing it he resurrected an earlier uncompleted manuscript, that had been begun as another *Tom Sawyer*, and in completing it he took its protagonist on a long journey down the Mississippi on a raft and on an even greater journey out of innocence and into the harsh realities of life. High tragedy and low comedy, simple nobility and conniving rascality are the stuff out of which life is made, as Mark Twain knew well. As he depicted the rustic Odyssey of young Huck Finn and Jim, the runaway Negro slave, on the raft and along the river, Twain produced a microcosm of the world; he pointed out the vivid contrast between the unreal innocence of idealism and the real harshness of truth; and he viewed the madness of a world devoted to appearance and to dupery through the sharp, unclouded vision of a boy.

In spite of an unevenness at the beginning and the end, probably the result of using too much of the old manuscript, the novel is the most balanced, most undistorted of any of Mark Twain's works, escaping both the simple good fun of the earlier works and the bitter harshness of those that came after; and it is a work that etches the nature of the world in sharp detail as it ranges between good and evil in an often sincere but too often futile attempt to distinguish between the two. The observations, as acute as they are in the novel, point inevitably in the direction of pessimism, as

does Huck's desire to escape the hopeless futility of civilization in the end, but the novel as a whole escapes it, and the qualities of humanity and reality, with all the strengths and weaknesses that make up both, dominate the novel.

But the implications that civilization corrupts and that much of mankind has somehow been flawed are unmistakable in *Huckleberry Finn*, and they lead directly to the bitter pessimism, disillusionment, and surrender to determinism that dominate Mark Twain's last works, most notably his best short story, "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1900), and two works that were long withheld from a public that had accepted him as a homorist, the essay "What is Man," written in 1893 and privately printed in 1906, and *The Mysterious Stranger*, an allegory that remained unpublished until 1916, six years after his death. In these Mark Twain is blunt and bitter: the world is corrupt beyond redemption; man himself is a fool who deludes himself into believing that good exists and that whatever his petty prejudices accept is inevitably good; and the universe itself is run by forces far beyond man's feeble intelligence or will. In essence he not only came to accept as reality the corruption and materialism that he satirized so sharply in *The Gilded Age*, but he accepted the deterministic premises of Darwinism; consequently, he believed that man is not only helpless in a mechanical, physical universe, but he is flawed by a perverted moral sense that leads him to wreak unspeakable evil in the name of good.

In his long writing career, ranging from late romanticism and what is essentially local color to naturalism, all of which was projected on a vividly portrayed and realistic background of human life, Mark Twain was authentically American, reflecting his time, place, and people more vividly than anyone else has done. He defined, too, the universal human dilemma of man's attempt to make order out of chaos, hope out of despair, in a world that he is too often forced to endure and that seems meaningless. Uninfluenced except by his keen eye for detail, his sharp ear for the speech of his people, and an often uncanny ability to see through appearance, dupery that it often is, Mark Twain provided

works that are not only great in themselves but as humor, as satire, and as sharp portrayals of man's lot have provided inspiration and insight for the two generations of writers who have followed him.

As important as Mark Twain was, however, in pointing out the direction of the new American realism and the new American literary renaissance to writers like Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner, he must share much of the credit with William Dean Howells and Henry James. Unlike Mark Twain, Howells and James were both conscious literary artists and articulate literary theorists who deliberately, in criticism as well as in fiction, pointed out the direction that the new American literature, if it was to be a true reflection of its time, had to take.

Howells, who was born in Ohio in 1837 as that state was emerging from its frontier period, died in 1920 as America's most respected man of letters. As poet, playwright, essayist, editor, and most importantly, as critic and novelist, he was highly instrumental in giving direction and shape to the great surge toward realistic writing in America in the post-Civil War years.

As novelist, William Dean Howells's best and most influential works were *A Modern Instance* (1882), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), and *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1889); as critic, in *Criticism and Fiction* (1891) he defined both his theory and practice in the spirit of the new realism that he worked so hard to establish. Essentially each of the three novels represent, much more clearly than Mark Twain's instinctive realistic protest, both the subject matter and the techniques of realism as it gained ascendency in the years during which the nineteenth century and America's innocent isolation came concurrently to their ends. *Crtitcism and Fiction* records and defines the end of both as it expresses the spirit of the new literature.

All three of these novels, like the bulk of Howells's work and the spirit of realism as he defined it, are socially critical in purpose and achievement, and all three of them, too, are attempts to record for posterity, in all graphic detail, the height and breadth of human experience in their time. In effect, *A Modern*

Instance and *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (his finest novel) are complementary as they attempt to define what Howells saw as the two major experiences of human life, moral deterioration and its counterpart, moral regeneration. In the two, without either pessimism or undue hope, Howells attempts to give a complete portrait of human experience.

The title of *A Modern Instance* is indicative of both subject matter and the realistic impulse as Howells traces in that novel the deterioration of a love relationship between a husband and wife. Not only are commonplace characters and the background of literary Boston sharply and vividly portrayed, but Howells is unsparing in his almost photographic attempt to reproduce life in a truly modern incident, rejecting heroics and tragedy as he pursues truth. In the counterpart novel, *The Rise of Silas Lapham* he employs the same techniques with a different twist: chance and the nature of an individual man permit a human victory rather than a human defeat. Either is possible, Howells asserts, as he looks at life as it appears to him. Like these two novels, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* depends on close, painstaking reproduction of life incidents and, most importantly, authentic human characters and situations, so authentic, in fact, that like the life upon which they are patterned, they tend to become tedious. But this is the nature of life, Howells maintains, and it is the function of the writer to reproduce it as closely and graphically as he can.

Actually, however, in spite of his assertion in *Criticism and Fiction* that the realistic writer must maintain a close fidelity both to the observable surface and the psychological basis of human life, Howells's realism may be characterized as both reticent and reluctant. It is reticent because in spite of his assertion that the writer must reproduce exactly, there is much in life, especially in its brutalities, its sexual proclivities, and its unpleasantness, that Howells chooses to ignore. But more importantly, Howells is reluctant to accept the evidence that he and his fellow observers have amassed and to make the necessary if unpleasant generalizations about the nature of man, of God, and of the universe that the evidence seemed to suggest in the closing years of the nine-

teenth century. Consequently, for Howells, realism remained two-dimensional; he emphasized subject matter and technique, while he was unwilling to penetrate to the third, philosophical dimension that Mark Twain found to be horrible, frightening, and yet inescapable. Howells contributed much to the realistic ethic, but he had neither the inclination nor the temperament to join the increasing chorus of naturalists.

Like Howells, Henry James was unwilling to accept the deterministic evidence that science and economics presented in support of the deterministic premise, partially, I suspect, because he chose to isolate himself from America as industrialism reached its peak and because he took refuge in a country that he never came to understand completely. More importantly, however, he was by nature a technician, a psychoanalyst, and a gentleman; consequently, he concerned himself in a magnificent array of novels and short stories with careful construction, close attention to style and form, and a precise dissection of character, all carefully controlled by a sense of correctness and taste that too often forced him into sterility and superficiality. Like Howells, he was reticent, and he was reluctant to carry his realistic commitment through to its logical conclusion. But within the framework of his restraint he did good service in the cause of the new direction in literature, and he produced a substantial body of first-rate work in the process.

In this long but essentially narrow range of work James produced three early first-rate works, *The American* (1877), *Daisy Miller* (1879), and *Portrait of a Lady* (1881), in each of which he probed his own experience as an expatriate as well as his observations of others, in the process examining closely the contrasts in human character and motivation brought about by different and often conflicting cultural backgrounds. In so doing, his accomplishment during these years was uneven, at its best, however, in *Portrait of a Lady*. In these three good novels of the period he defined the subject matter, techniques, and themes that were to dominate his work for more than thirty years.

The subject matter with which James was to concern himself

to the end of his writing career was that of the American expatriate in Europe as he observed and experienced the phenomenon during the many years that he spent abroad; the technique he employed was a careful examination of both the surface of the impact and, probably influenced by his brother William, the psychological realm of motivation, action, and reaction that inevitably grew out of his subject matter and technique. In using this new technique of psychological realism as a basis for much of his work, James contributed a great deal to the realistic movement. In fact, without the close attention to this human dimension that James insisted was necessary, true realism could not be possible.

The three major themes upon which James built his career grew directly out of his fusion of subject matter and technique. The first of these contrasts the American with the European, realistically appraising both as the simple sincerity of the American clashes with the sophisticated deceit of the European and as American crudity is exposed in the light of European culture. James emphasizes, too, the inevitable conflict between the realities of life and the controlled discipline of art as a major theme. But his most important thematic contribution is closely related to his psychological technique: it is a rejection of moral or ethical definitions of good and evil in favor of psychological definitions. In this important concept James was most modern, anticipating the influence of Freud and pragmatism upon fiction by a generation.

All of these techniques and themes are most fully developed in James's three masterpieces, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1903), and *The Golden Bowl* (1904), the last three completed works with which he closed his career. In these novels James comes full circle, reconciling the cultural conflicts of America and Europe and, most importantly, like Howells, rejecting determinism as he asserts that his people do have the control over their destinies that he feels is necessary to the human situation. Perhaps in his final statement James seems unduly optimistic, as does Howells, certainly more so than twentieth century mat-

erialism seems to justify, but his world view was close to the nature of life as he saw it.

In attempting to define the ultimate contribution of these three writers, Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and Henry James, to the rise of realism in America, it is not enough merely to acknowledge the works that they produced, however. It is necessary to emphasize that they pioneered a new way of looking at the world and a new technique of reporting what they saw, and in so doing they marked out the path that is followed by almost all of the significant writers of the twentieth century even yet. Man, they emphasize, is an intelligent animal and a social animal, caught up in, driven by, and responsive to the demands of the world in which he lives, a world that is undeniably real. The human task, then, is to come to some sort of terms with that world, terms that will permit the individual to survive. Each of the three found, in his own way, a measure of acceptance and of compromise that enabled him to go on.

Realism, in the final analysis, is the effort to recreate life, but before that can be done, one must understand the age in which he lives. The new world of industrialism and materialism left the romantics far behind, and the local colorists, too, found it baffling. It was left to the realists, men like Twain, Howells, and James, to begin a new, valid interpretation of that world.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MODERN AMERICAN NOVEL: A SEARCH FOR MEANING

In our age as in any other it is evident that true literature knows no national boundaries, that it transcends the arbitrary lines that divide men and attempts to probe the universal problems that have plagued man since he first emerged on earth. Certainly in the twentieth century such a statement can best be verified by the fact that in recent years we have seen the Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to Seferiade, a Greek, Steinbeck, an American, Pasternak, a Russian, and so many others of diverse national and regional origins and languages. The common core of their diverse works is not merely artistic or aesthetic excellence; it is that each of them in his own way has attempted to redefine for the twentieth century the age-old questions of the meaning of man's life, his nature, and his ultimate destiny, questions that renew their importance in an age of the mass man and mass technology, an age that has discovered the secret of man's destruction.

Consequently, to speak of the modern American novel is to speak of the world novel insofar as it attempts to solve, or at least, to redefine the problems and perhaps, ultimately, to find

satisfactory answers to those problems that have gained new and frightening ascendency in the twentieth century. Certainly much of the literary impulse of the twentieth century has been to rediscover a synthesis of meaning that man saw within his grasp more than a hundred years ago, only to find it snatched from him by the new science, the new technology, and the new philosophy, all of which tend, ultimately, to deny man the Godhead that he seeks. If I dwell, then, on the American novel and tend to imply a lack of evidence for my belief that the true novel today is a world novel, it is not because I do not subscribe wholeheartedly to that thesis, nor because I feel that American novelists today are more closely attuned to the problems; it is simply that I am that bane of the twentieth century, a specialist; my speciality happens to be modern American literature; and consequently I am most familiar with what my contemporary countrymen are doing.

The nature of the problem that is faced by the modern novelist is quite complex. It is a search for meaning in a world that is apparently meaningless, a search for values in a world that apparently has none; a search for permanence in a world of instability; a search for absolutes in a world whose ultimate reality is relativity. Such a search is a romantic search, an idealistic search, as William Faulkner so aptly made clear in his speech accepting the Nobel Prize, although attempts to define that search as idealistic have brought scoffs and sneers from novelists like Ernest Hemingway and James Jones, themselves incorrigible but reluctant romantics rather than the hard-headed and hard-hearted realists that they assert themselves to be.

We can, as I commented, find the origins of modern man's dilemma and consequently the beginning of the modern novel just over a hundred years ago. The first half of the nineteenth century saw romantic idealism reach its peak in the widespread acceptance among literary artists of the belief that the physical world was at best symbolic, at worst an illusion, and that the ultimate reality of the universe was spiritual and hence good. Consequently, if man seeks this truth beyond the mirage of appearance he can

himself progress to ultimate perfection. An age of optimism, of faith, and of confidence, it affirmed goodness; it denied the existence of evil; and it pointed the way to a life that was both meaningful and good.

But in the background of the mid-nineteenth century the perfection of such a world view was being questioned. Much has been made of the role of the new physical and biological sciences in denying the faith of the romantic idealist, and, of course, the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1856 is important for introducing the possibility that chance rather than God, physical laws rather than spiritual will, ruled the destinies of men. But, important as the new science was in shaking the foundations of romantic idealism, it was but part of a pattern that introduced a new and startling possibility: as refined techniques of war, the inhumanity of the industrial revolution, and persistent slaveholding tended to indicate, the drive for progress, for perfectability, and consequently for Godhead might not be innate in man. Perhaps, then, while man sought an impossible spiritual perfection, he regressed in the physical world that was increasingly demanding around him. Perhaps, too, as Darwin seemed to indicate, there was no spiritual reality but merely a physical, mechanical force. More important, and certainly more devastating to the romantics, perhaps evil rather than good was the ultimate meaning of man's life and the arbiter of his destiny.

This period of uncertainty, of philosophical ambiguity and insecurity, was marked by the production of literature that is both great and modern, most notably Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, a magnificent attempt to resolve the dilemma of good versus evil within the framework of a painfully real world. Perhaps much of the greatness that the modern mind sees in *Moby-Dick* is the magnificence both of the attempt and the failure to resolve a problem that we perceive, still unresolved, in the world around us. After a silence of almost thirty years, Melville again attempted and failed to resolve the dilemma in *Billy Budd*, but by that time the dilemma *was* resolved, at least temporarily, with a horrifying acceptance of the physical and evil reality that Melville tried un-

successfully to deny.

The pioneers of the new attempted resolution in America were Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and Henry James, each of whom sought a new philosophic synthesis in his work. Howells, a son of the harshly realistic frontier, sought his synthesis in "fidelity to experience and probability of motive", an approach that, while emphasizing the reality of the physical universe, added little to understanding man's dilemma in the modern world. James, too, sought a philosophic synthesis, and in so doing, his work like Howells's new realism, contributed much to literary technique and style, while it missed the heart of meaning in a materialistic universe. Mark Twain came closer than either of these two in his tentative acceptance of the reality of evil and the nature of the evidence provided by scientific determinisim. In *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Gilded Age*, and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* he led directly to the pessimistic pronouncements of "The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg", "What is Man?", and *The Mysterious Stranger*. But Mark Twain, blinded by a reality that was increasingly horrible, did not seek an ultimate answer to man's dilemma because to him nothing existed except the torment of the immediate.

None of the three found the answers that they sought, primarily because the evidence was too immediate and perhaps too frightening to deal with objectively. It was left to a new generation of young writers to use the techniques of objective appraisal provided by these three, to appraise the world as it moved into the twentieth century, and to provide what they saw as definitive statements of the meaning of man in a materialistic society and a mechanistic universe. Among the young men were Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser, and the philosophic synthesis that they proclaimed, the very antithesis of romantic idealism, came to be known as naturalism.

The new premise, based firmly on the acceptance of the ultimate reality as physical, entails, too, the complete assimilation of the premises of Darwinism for its answer to the nature of man and of economic determinism for its answer to the meaning of his

life. Consequently, it maintains, in opposition to romantic idealism, that man is the prisoner of his heredity and environment, that he is a physical animal motivated by the same base drives that motivate his less intelligent fellows, and that the mechanistic nature of the universe is at best indifferent to his fate and at worst downright hostile. Consequently, human life is brief, transient, painful, and meaningless. Crane proclaimed his thesis bravely in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and "The Open Boat"; Dreiser did the same in *Sister Carrie, Jennie Gerhardt*, and *An American Tragedy*. It is worth nothing that Crane died at the height of his deterministic conviction, while Dreiser, who lived to old age, tempered his a great deal in *The Bulwark* and *The Stoic*, his last novels after a long creative silence. Undiluted naturalism is a grim philosophy with which to live.

In fact, it is so difficult to accept that either naturalism itself had to be alleviated, or literature could not endure except to sing paeans of pain and despair in a meaningless void. Almost before the naturalistic premises had been clearly defined, the refusal to accept them became evident in a new philosophical confusion, a confusion that has persisted to the present. In Frank Norris's *The Octopus* and *The Pit* there is the attempt to find a vague spiritual and good meaning in spite of all the deterministic evidence, and in Jack London's *The Sea Wolf* and *Martin Eden* there is an attack on the Nietzchean concept of the superman that raises moral questions completely alien to literary or philosophical naturalism.

At this point the search began for a new, more satisfactory syhthesis, incorporating all the physical evidence and yet transcending it to find a meaningful, valuable rationale for man in the midst of a material, seemingly hostile world. But instinctively the new young writers, among them Sherwood Anderson, perceived that the scope of the search had to be narrowed, that they, in effect, had to return to Emerson's dictum, "Know Thyself"; they were, consequently, accepting on faith the idealistic premise that somehow, somewhere, they could find meaning if they probed deeply and long enough. The result was a new age of liberation

among writers who, in small, intense groups in New York, Chicago, and Paris, set out to find fulfillment in individual and collective declarations of independence from the confines of literary and social determinism. In spirit the new romantics were the grandsons of Emerson and Whitman, and they were the fathers of the equally romantic Beats like Jack Keruoac; their works, most notably shown in Sherwood Anderon's *Winesburg, Ohio,* are attempts to penetrate the surface appearance of human life, to probe the problems of human isolation and dehumanization at the hands of materialism, and to reveal the essence of repressed humanity, an essence that is both spiritual and good. Each of them was seeking a new faith, a standard of absolute values upon which could be built a new, humanized society.

But this new liberated, romantic search received a setback shortly after its inception when World War I and its aftermath, the materialistic binge of the 1920's, intervened. The new idealists, including young men named Ernest Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald, stunned, rendered impotent, alternately repulsed and fascinated, could only wander, drink, and protest in violent and sexual terms what the material world had done to them. Hemingway's people regret in *The Sun Also Rises* that they might have had such a damn good time had the world let them, but they can only wander off into the rain, as does Lt. Henry in *A Farewell to Arms,* as the sheer horror of reality and mortality makes itself felt. Or overwhelmed by the postwar materialistic madness, as was Fitzgerald, too many sought fulfillment and permanence in the very materialistic things that would destroy them. The 1920's was a time of intellectual and philosophic confusion like that of the 1850's that produced *Moby-Dick,* and although those years, too, produced much of permanent literary value, they came no closer, in fact they were farther from a solution to the problem of evil and of materialism, that was Melville so long before.

But then came the return to sanity in the 1930's as the material fulfillment of the twenties proved illusory, and the rise of Fascism threatened man himself. At the end of the decade, coexistent with the rise of the contemporary novel, Ernest Hemingway made his

first tentative advance of an idealistic solution at the end of *For Whom The Bell Tolls* as Robert Jordan faces inevitable death in confidence, knowing that it has all been worthwhile and that not merely his life, but more importantly his death has had meaning. Perhaps, suggests Hemingway, pointing out a new and important field of speculation, this is the only meaning that exists, but if it is, if man can advance the human cause, even by dying, then life *is* worthwhile, it *is* meaningful and good. This is, of course, in degree rather than kind the same sort of affirmation of the human spirit that John Steinbeck proclaimed so proudly at the end of *The Grapes of Wrath*. At this time, too, Scott Fitzgerald, perceiving the horror of materialistic futility, sought, tragically too late, to follow in the same direction.

World War II neither provided the shock to the new postwar writers that its namesake had, nor did it do more than delay the further development of this new, seemingly ephemeral, but nevertheless significantly real idealism as it was further defined in the postwar years, not only in the new works of the writers who had paved the way, as in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and Faulkner's continued probing of the mythological basis of morality in *The Fable* and in *The Hamlet, The Town,* and *The Mansion,* but, most importantly, in the works of the new writers, those to whom the search, unbroken and unfinished, has been handed.

Who, then, are the significant novelists now writing, what are they trying to do, and what are their chances for producing significant, worthwhile, permanent additions to literature? Obviously there are no definitive answers, but the recent deaths of Hemingway, Faulkner, and so many other great writers who are now rapidly becoming literary history prompts the necessity of providing some tentative, hopefully promising generalizations. At the common core of the work of the new novelists, as at the heart of Hemingway, Faulkner, and the other greats of the pre-war years, there is an acceptance of the essentially deterministic framework of the universe and an acceptance of the reality of the world in which we live. These are self-evident as well as scientifically verifiable truths, neither shocking nor frightening. But the new

novelists assert, almost in chorus, that they are not all that exists, as the naturalists had asserted earlier in the century, and the new writers are probing the nature of that ephemeral reality somewhere beyond the physical fact in spite of the deterministic evidence. In the process there seems to be evolving both a new concept of tragedy and a new statement of the meaning of man's life and the world in which he lives.

This new dual concept is illustrated in the works of those novelists who came out of World War II itself, among them Norman Mailer, John Horne Burns, and Stefan Heym, the best of those who found both subject matter and meaning in a war that they saw as essentially worthwhile, as a step forward on the long road that, each of them asserted, would end with the acceptance of human responsibility for the evils man had wrought and the growth of the will to resist and ultimately destroy that evil. Unlike novelists like Hemingway, Dos Passos, March, and the others who emerged from World War I, these three, and a good many lesser writers, emerged with a sense of direction, of purpose, and of hope that was impossible for their predecessors. Of the three, Mailer in *The Naked and the Dead* wrote on a scale and with an intensity that provided the most promise as well as the clearest statement of progress and hope, not in abstract concepts of justice and dignity, but in a return to the recognition of human worth, the acceptance of individual responsibility, and a rejection of the slogans, the dogma, and the materialistic gadjets that both separate men and set them at each other's throats. This is the meaning of the war, Mailer asserts, and the others agree. It was a mad war, as all wars are mad, but a necessary war, both because it was necessary to clear the air of 20th century inhumanity and because it provided a remarkable microcosm of our time. The individual of dignity, compassion, and wisdom does not survive the war, in their works, just as he finds it almost impossible to maintain his individuality in our age, but at least, unlike Hemingway's early heroes, he does not run; he has a cause that is worth fighting for and dying for.

Burns in *The Gallery* and Heym in *The Crusaders* (note, for

example, the symbolism of the titles) concur in pointing out the curious combination of social triumph and individual tragedy that emerges from the war and that, in turn, provided three of our promising young war novelists a promise that, as in the case of too many of our younger writers, has not been realized. Mailer, the most promising, has thus far failed either to live up to his potential or to move forward along the grand line of combat that he pointed out, except in his pugnacious personal and political affairs. After *Barbary Shore*, an earnest but faltering attempt to carry on into the postwar years, and a scandalous but philosophically vacuous expose of Hollywood in *The Deer Park*, we have been treated to *Advertisements For Myself*—for Mailer, that is—to pronouncements on too many topics in too many ways, and to a profound literary silence. Perhaps the unfortunate combination of an intensely moving experience too early in life and a much too early commercial success has made Mailer too early a grand old man—opinionated, outspoken, and unfortunately unproductive. Burns, too, is silent; after a muted eloquent plea for understanding in *A Cry of Children*, he died of a brain tumor.

Nevertheless, in spite of unfulfilled promise, the war novelists have marked out a new path characterized by hope for the individual in the act of fighting, and by the assertion that a new sense of faith in man is possible, and that out of the inevitable conflict between man and the machine a dignity and a sense of personal worth may evolve. The true significance of this new direction lies in the fact that their characters search and fight, even to the death, rather than wander hopelessly into a rainy, boozy, aimless future.

But the war is now eighteen years in the past, and its young writers are rapidly becoming literary history, while the novel goes on in the hands of another group who, attaining promise—and, fortunately, I think, a modest rather than a cyclonic critical and literary success—have nevertheless continued the search for permanence, for value, for meaning within, or perhaps in spite of, the confines of materialism and determinism. One group, unfortunately too nearly a coterie of *New Yorker*-like cleverness but that nevertheless is both productive and provoking, is that which

for want of a better convenient term can be called the Neo-Gothics, Southern for the most part, who, drawing their inspiration from Sherwood Anderson and William Faulkner, have turned to exploring the dim, dark regions of human consciousness, human grotesquery, and human isolation. Of them, the most spectacular has been Truman Capote, the most consistently good, Carson McCullers, the most promising, William Styron and Flannery O'Connor, and the most evocative of a nameless primeval horror still imprisoned in man's consciousness, Shirley Jackson, the only Northerner among a conscious-striken, perhaps even a guilt-ridden, myth-ridden group of Southerners.

Capote, like Mailer, was a sudden young success who, at forty now, seems, too, to be in danger of becoming a grand old man. (He has just published his collected selected works, either an unfortunate sign that he is through, or hopefully an indication that he is going to turn in new directions.) Perhaps he may yet build on the solid, provocative achievement of *Other Voices, Other Rooms,* in which he probed deeply into the Southern consciousness and into the intolerant inhumanity or, worse, misunderstanding, that isolates one, whether in a decaying magnolia-shaded mansion or wherever man finds himself in a world devoted to externals. But Capote, a gifted writer, did not live up to his promise in *The Grass Harp;* his later, shorter works indicate that the loneliness, still there, has, unfortunately for artistic worth, been buried under an adjustment to integrated vapidity made possible by psychoanalysis.

In *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* Carson McCullers portrays piognantly a silent yet movingly meaningful relationship between two persons unable to speak; in *Ballad of the Sad Cafe* she probes the equally moving understanding found by two grotesque caricatures of human beings to the bafflement of their fellows; and in *The Member of the Wedding,* she turns to the isolation of adolescence, a too-popular, too-perennial cliche that tends to oversimplify the profundity of her earlier statements.

Styron and O'Connor turn, too, to the introspective, to the isolated loneliness of bafflement in a world too horrible to con-

template, and yet their people do not surrender; in *Lie Down in Darkness*, for example, Styron's heroine commits suicide on the day the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a bit of symbolism that, while heavy-handed, indicates both the terror and the defiance that seem destined to an inevitable confrontation in our time. Shirley Jackson, too, perceives horror, but of another kind, the horror, as in *The Lottery*, of men who destroy without knowing why, or, what is worse, without recognizing that it is destruction in spite of a gnawing, nameless sense of guilt.

On the whole, however, inspite of the fact that there are many individual artistic achievements among the neo-gothics, I am not optimistic about either their direction or their permanence. One of the most serious deficiencies is their preoccupation with feeling rather than with people, with atmosphere rather than drama, and with static situations rather than with life itself. Narrow in scope, too often we find them demanding our sympathic response to an abnormality defiantly proclaimed rather than subtly revealed. We find, too, a contentment with a narrow, lifeless society rather than the main stream of the very inhumanity they decry; and we find, increasingly, that the neo-gothics are dependent on a determinedly literary style, a precious sensibility, and an adolescent demand for compassion and understanding that they and their people refuse to earn. This path leads inevitably to a dead end, an interesting byway remote from either the drama of great literature or of a sharp definition of the lot of man in the middle of the 20th century.

Hopefully, however, there is an extremely active segment of young and not so young writers who refuse to be typed, either by subject matter or approach. Some of them have already done substantial work, others are promising, and still others perhaps slipping a bit, but all of them probing, all of them producing, and all of them willing to meet, head-on, the modern intensification of man's dilemma.

Among the most significant of the older but still producing group is Robert Penn Warren, while apparently John Steinbeck, resting on his laurels after his long journey with Charlie and his Nobel surprise, has joined the ranks of the grand old men. Still

writing, however, is Warren, whose two best novels are *Night Rider*, in which he, like so many of his Southern contemporaries, probes the psychological omnipresence of guilt, and *All The King's Men*, the superb fictional interpretation of Hughey Long's drive for power. In almost all of his novels, ranging from the earliest to latecomers like *The Cave*, Warren toys almost unwillingly with the concept that somehow man was flawed in the making, a sort of literary original sin not of Warren's own discovery that recurs even in his poetry and essays. In many respects, as in the case of Willie Stark, Warren's portrayal of Hughey Long, it emerges as a regret for lost innocence in a world in which the just man must recognize this loss and accept his responsibility if he is to find salvation, either individually or collectively. Recognizing the omnipresence of violence and personal contamination, surely a valid view of the nature of the modern world, Warren nevertheless asserts that man can rise above both if he wants to; the choice is his and his alone to make. When the literary history of our generation is written Warren will occupy a large part of it, larger certainly than too many of our critics now ascribe to him, because a novelist who understands so well the nature of man's fall has led his readers a long way on the road to redemption.

Mary McCarthy, too, is still producing her brilliant, sharply defined prose, most recently in *The Group*, a bitingly satirical and yet firmly realistic portrayal of the rise and fall of the women of her generation and background, as effective a job as in *The Groves of Academe*, her dissection of the modern academic world, and *A Charmed Life*, in which she examined the village through eyes that she constantly asserts are nothing if not honest. Her vision is tragicomic but thus far it is limited. I cannot refrain from wishing that Miss McCarthy would lose her preoccupation with her attempt to be the American Simone de Bouviour: then, perhaps, *The Group* might be more than *The Mandarins* transplanted, and her sense of identification with her characters would carry with it a compassion, the lack of which limits the height and depth of her work.

Now that James T. Farrell has apparently retired and John

O'Hara is mellowing to a sympathetic awareness of man's fragile humanity, our only living serious determinist is Nelson Algren, whose people, like those of his mentors, inhabit South Side Chicago and wild side New Orleans. Algren writes of the people who have somehow become lost or cast aside in our society; unfortunately the sympathy for them that he asserts he feels fails to come through in spite of his further assertation that they are bigger, finer people than those who confidently know where they're going. As sharp, indignant social criticism, his *Man With the Golden Arm* and *A Walk on the Wild Side* are eloquent, but thus far he has been unable to do more than point an accusing finger.

These, however, are writers who have established their reputations and polished their craft over a period of years, and each of them has now reached a point where we can at least attempt to make critical generalizations about them. Two more of their number deserve recognition both for what they have done and what they are capable of doing. These are Saul Bellow and J. D. Salinger, the first of whom writes on the grand scale not only of the broad environment of his protagonists but of the universe of which they are a part. Salinger, on the other hand, restricts himself to the narrow stage of the *New Yorker*, in which most of his work first appeared, and to a narrow cult of personality, of vague spiritual searching, and what too often resembles a modern synthetically produced and plastic wrapped love. Of the two, I have the most confidence in Bellow; somehow there seems little beyond the Glass family for Salinger. But Bellow is the true novelist of man's great quest. In all his work from *Dangling Man* to *Henderson the Rain King* one senses a compulsion to seek, to know, to believe both in the protagonists themselves and in their relationship to a seemingly chaotic universe that is somehow, somewhere orderly and meaningful. The picaresque, conscious buffoonery of the *Adventures of Augie March* and the comic pilgrimage of *Henderson the Rain King* mark a turning point; his early heroes were self-consciously determined, but now Bellow knows that getting here is half the fun, that life itself is the grand adventure if one permits it to be. Bellow is certainly one of the brave men now writing.

I realize that this is getting too long, that it borders perilously on being a mere list, and that the inevitable result of such a combination is tediousness. But I must take that risk as we glance quickly at four very young men who provide a bit of insight into the future. These are John Updike, Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, and J. F. Powers, names that I am confident will become a great deal more familiar in the future. Certainly, at least, they are true writers in an age that too often seems hopeless when one regards the frightening spectacle of anti-novels—the adolescent rantings of Jack Kerouac, the sentimentality and incipient Fascism of Herman Woulk, the sexsational illiteracy of Grace Metalious—that achieve such prominence and such profits.

But among an impressive list of young writers who are doing good, if as yet limited, work, these four regard both the form and the substance of the novel with the seriousness that it deserves. Of the four Updike has the richest talent, and *The Poorhouse Fair*, *Rabbit Run*, and *The Centaur*, are evocative of the great search for personal immortality led more than a hundred years ago by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. In his attempt both to define modern American life and to penetrate its surface to its most fundamental relationships to the individuals whom it uses and discards at will, Updike refuses either to protest or to accept. Instead, his view of the dehumanizing interdependence of man, machine, and social structure, allows him to view death and evil with a confidence that transcends them, and in so doing he allows glimpses of human glory and salvation permitted to few who are writing or even living in the twentieth century. Thus far, unfortunately, Updike has limited himself to his narrow experience, as did the younger Herman Melville, but he has found his voice and his view; all that is lacking is the grand stage that Melville found in a vast ocean and a small ship.

Thus far the other three have also limited themselves to smaller arenas than their talents justify; Malamud to the Jewish experience of depth, isolation, and haunting symbolism as it confronts a society that sneers at tradition; and Roth to the same tradition as it attempts to strike a balance with the 20th century and yet

retain a semblance of identity. Powers is most impressive in his recent gem *Morte D'Urban* as he brings the transience of glory and the eternity of faith to a skilfully subdued collision that rejects the glittering kingdom of the world in favor of an understanding and acceptance that again reminds one of the great romantics of the past. All four of these young men, refusing to accept the final pat answers of the world of the bomb and Hollywood, or the easy assurance of a psychiatrist's stylish decor, presage a future for the novel in America. But, and it is an extremely important but, they must forsake the security of their limited environments and use the talents and courage they have already demonstrated on the broad canvas of our time.

However, the issue is moot at the moment, but as one with a great deal of faith in the novel as the art form that can come closest to defining the human experience as it finds itself in time and yet constantly confronts eternity, I feel that the novel will not only go on but that it will find dimensions in man that are still undiscovered.

CHAPTER IX

SHERWOOD ANDERSON AND THE TWO FACES OF AMERICA

Perhaps the most perplexing and seemingly irreconcilable problem that faces the literary idealist in America is the basic dichotomy in American life: the great gulf that separates the American ideal that was born in the Enlightenment and matured in the concepts of Jacksonian and Lincolnian democracy, and the American reality that found its voice in the Gospel of Wealth and is still propagated by the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Annual Report* of General Motors Corporation. In the years after the rise of great concentrations of power and wealth at the end of the nineteenth century, the problem became especially acute, finding expression in the philosophical confusion of Frank Norris and Jack London and the deterministic pessimism of Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser.

At this stage Sherwood Anderson began to be noticed on the literary scene. As a promising young advertising writer and businessman, he was, at 30, a success according to materialistic standards, but then something happened. The business ethics that were so successful did not jibe with the American ideal he had

learned in the grammar school of Clyde, Ohio. Letting his business affairs slide, he turned first to drinking and women, and finally to serious writing in the effort to find out what had gone wrong with the American dream. His first two novels were propaganda pieces of protest; as he learned his craft he delved more deeply into the dichotomy of real and ideal.

During the first fifteen years of his active literary career Sherwood Anderson dealt with three major themes: the act of rebellion, on an individual basis, against the predominant materialistic philosophy in American life; the isolation of the individual; and, increasingly, the nature of the spiritual reality that, he was sure, lay under the materialistic surface of American life. These themes were no mere artistic or intellectual exercises for Anderson, however; they were vital problems in his own life as he progressed from manufacturer to rebelling advertising copywriter to conscious literary artist.

During these years, roughly from 1912 to 1927, he wrote, among others, what are commonly conceded to be his best works: *Winesburg, Ohio* in 1917-1918; *Poor White* in 1918-1919; and the two collections of short stories, *Horses and Men* and *The Triumph of the Egg*, in the early twenties. In these works and in reviewing his writing career in *A Story-Teller's Story* (1924) Anderson provided tentative answers to the problems inherent in those themes, carrying them out both in the works and in his own life. The former resulted in the recognition of his own role as story-teller-interpreter in *A Story-Teller's Story* and in the recognition of small-town virtues in *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* in 1926. His tentative solutions, applied to his own life, led him to leave the advertising business and commercialism forever in 1922, to wander through the South, and finally, in 1926, to settle down in rural Southwestern Virginia, buying a farm and two weekly newspapers, and returning in fact as well as spirit to the kind of life that he had left behind in Clyde, Ohio, twenty years before. Marion, Virginia, in 1927, like Clyde in 1897, was tentatively and reluctantly engaged in a flirtation with industrialism, and it was as close to the post-Civil War Midwestern environment as

it was possible to find in twentieth-century America.

Anderson's tentative solutions to the problems inherent in personal rebellion, in human isolation, and in seeking for the reality underlying surface appearance were simple. They consisted of finding, in a backwater remote from the main stream of American life, a place in which he could learn to know, as he already loved, the unsophisticated but no less complex people who were uncorrupted by the lust for things; by breaking down the artificial barriers erected by caste and by economics between them and himself; and by giving of himself to them as freely as was possible. The record of this attempt appeared in *Hello Towns!*, a collection of his newspaper articles, in 1929.

During these years Anderson was a happy man in spite of the breakup of his third marriage, a strong sense of frustration resulting from his inability to carry on sustained creative work, and, most importantly, the rapid decline of his literary reputation. Although these things hurt him personally, so sure was he that he had found the answers to his problems that he could ignore them, and his letters of the period show a strong belief that his old creative power would soon re-assert itself.

Oddly, in spite of the fact that he was a revolutionist during the first fifteen years of his literary career, Anderson was simply not interested in the political or economic scene as it existed. Instead it was merely something to rebel against. Although he had called himself a socialist as early as 1912, his prime interest in his work from 1916 to 1930 was not the world as he found it, but the world as he would like it to be. Harding neighborliness, Coolidge prosperity, and the mad materialistic binge that led to the crash of 1929 left him untouched and uninterested. Even the crash itself passed unnoticed in the columns of his papers, the *Smyth County News* and the *Marion Democrat*, the political editorials of which, he incidentally, had always farmed out.

During the three years immediately preceding the crash he had ventured out into the world infrequently and then reluctantly, but one of these trips was for the purpose of interviewing Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce under Coolidge. In the

resulting article that appeared in his papers, he glipmsed in Hoover's personality a symbol of the age he had rejected.

> They [the industrialists] have raised this Mr. Hoover up out of the ranks of men as perhaps the finest Republican example of manhood and ability in present-day American political and industrial life. He is, apparently, a man very sure of himself. His career has been a notable one. From a small beginning he has risen steadily in power. There has never been any check. I felt, looking at him, that he had never known failure.
>
> It is too bad never to have known that. Never to have known miserable nights of remorse, feeling the world too big and strange and difficult for you.

In spite of this almost mystic moment of insight that not only sees Hoover as the symbol of his age but also sees the need for spiritual cleansing of a nation drunk with materialistic power, Anderson was not being prophetic, nor was he being consciously superior in spite of having rejected all that Hoover stood for. Rather he was characterizing a man and an age, and in doing so he was pointing out the direction that both his future work and his personal interests were to take.

Although Anderson could and did ignore the crash he could not ignore the human suffering that grew out of the resulting chaos. The compassion that he felt for the victims of uncontrolled economic forces led to the subject matter of the works of the last ten years of his life, works that are almost invariably ignored by Anderson critics because they are different from his early success. Nevertheless, in spite of critical neglect, they contain some of his most perceptive observations and forceful writing. More importantly, however, they are an almost successful attempt to fuse the two concepts of America, the real, a land of material well-being, and the ideal, a land in which the individual could find his fullest human expression. This attempt to find one ultimate meaning behind the two faces of America as he saw them was for Anderson the most difficult but the most challenging phase of his literary career.

His movement back into the world began as the seriousness of economic collapse became apparent. In late 1930 in a letter to a

friend he wrote:

> . . . the artist is, after all, partly a product of his environment . . . He does not escape the general tone and mood of the world in any event. It is antagonistic now . . . We have to participate . . . I can't quite draw away from my fellows no matter how much I try.

A bit later he wrote that "The general spirit . . . seems to be one of heavy sadness . . . A little bit, I guess, America is being caught up with . . . more and more men unemployed, while there are more goods than ever before being produced." In common with the rest of the country he had no idea that the difficulty was to be as severe as it became, but he went on, "An artist cannot help being affected by the mood of his time . . . We have now, in our cities, really hard times . . . We have hordes of unemployed. There are breadlines everywhere."

During the next three years he travelled almost constantly, visiting the mining and mill towns of the South and the farming communities of the Midwest, trying to find out what had happened, and trying to find a solution that would construct a new relationship between the American reality and the ideal, a new unity with the reality the servant of rather than the master of the ideal. An often-exaggerated flirtation with Communism resulted, but Anderson distrusted such an easy solution, writing in 1930, "I am not so sure . . . that we want Socialism and certainly not wholesale Communism," and later,

> I am puzzled about Communism, as I am sure you may be. It may be the answer, and then it may only be a new sort of Puritanism, more deadly than the old moral Puritanism, a new kind of Puritanism at last got power in one place to push its rigid Puritanism home.

Although Anderson aided striking miners and millworkers, frequently speaking at gatherings to support or organize them, his most important contributions to their cause as well as to the cause of a bewildered country are in his works, especially three books written during the depression years, the novel *Beyond Desire* (1932), the collection of essays, *No Swank* (1934), and the book of observations, *Puzzled America* (1935). His own recognition that his writing was perhaps the best contribution that he

could make toward fusing the real with the ¡deal and producing a new America is made clear in a letter to the editor of the Soviet *Literary Gazette*, who had criticized Anderson's work as being too much concerned with attention to depicting bourgeoisie psychology. He wrote:

> America started out, apparently, with so much to offer to the world. In making our offer to the world we have apparently failed. We have become a people, rich in goods and too poor in something else . . . For one thing, we as a people do not know each other very well, do not draw close together, and I myself, as a writer, have wanted more than anything else to make Americans, in the civilization in which they are compelled to live now, better known to each other.
>
> I am not so sure that simple stories of human beings caught and held suspended in a civilization, are not better material for the ultimate revolution that must come here than anything else I can do . . . I am not at all troubled over what you are doing there, although I admit that I am sometimes troubled a good deal as to how I may make my best contribution here.

Anderson's first major contribution was the novel *Beyond Desire*, in which the protagonist, Red Oliver, the son of a southern aristocrat and a poor white woman, is torn between the two factions as it becomes increasingly evident that he must align himself with one or the other. In the end, Oliver, after contemplating joining the Communists, joins strikers at a textile mill, and in a clash with the National Guard, he is killed. The novel portrays the confusion of the times as well as Anderson's own confusion as the protagonist meditates:

> There were new words, new ideas, striking on the consciousness of people. The words themselves bothered Red. "Communism, socialism, the bourgeoisie, capitalism, Karl Marx." The bitter, long struggle that had to come . . . the war . . . that was what it would be . . . between those who had and those who couldn't get . . . There would be all sorts of queer new alignments of people in life . . . new alignments made, having to be made. In the end every man and every woman, even the children, would have to line themselves up on the one side or the other.

In the bewilderment of the Hoover administration this novel was Anderson's notice of his own personal alignment. It is not

a novel about Communism, nor is it a call to revolution, although both charges have been levelled at it. Rather, it is a portrayal of a time, place, and combination of circumstances that gave rise to more indecision and self-interrogation than any other period in American history with the exception of the oubreak of the Civil War. In it Anderson has attempted to cram all the atmosphere and background of the times, resulting in an accurate reflection of the ferment in which the country was caught up. It is politically inconclusive, but it is not philosophically inconclusive as it points out that man must identify himself with either the humanizing or the de-humanizing forces in our society, and then support his choice, even to death.

At this time Anderson served as a delegate to the "World's Congress Against War", which met in Amsterdam in August and September, 1932, and impressed with the harmony of the meeting, he signed its resolution against Fascism and war. On his return he published *Death in the Woods,* a collection of stories in the old Anderson tradition, but he was almost immediately swept up in the enthusiasm, the sense of mission, and the purpose that was the New Deal. This, for Anderson, became a peculiarly American answer to the call for revolution and for joining material well-being with idealistic purpose in a new America that would place machines and economic systems in their proper subordinate role in a society based upon love and compassion rather than on greed.

Anderson wanted to serve the New Deal without pay, as did so many of his friends, but he couldn't afford to. Nevertheless, he declared his allegiance in *No Swank,* a small, limited-edition volume of essays that appeared in 1934. In the title essay, a sketch of Henry Wallace, he wrote:

> There is this desire among men, here in America just now, to like and understand each other. It is a pretty dominant hunger among us. I can't help feeling that this thing we are going through, this depression, men and women hungry, suffering, out of work, the spiritual stress and strain of all this . . . the old prosperous, proud, cock-sure America in some queer way blown up, rows of staring blank-eyed fac-

> tories in industrial towns, Wall Street men who were but yesterday millionaires now broke and knowing the common man's fear of the future . . . there is or at least should be some chance for something humanizing to grow out of all this, and it is needed, for the successful Americans of the past have been about the most lonely people in the world. Individualism and loneliness always go together.

In the essay he pointed out the crux of the problem as he saw it: "Our problem is apparently to lift a whole race of so-called individualists out of individualism and into civilization. It will take very sincere and human and civilized men of the Henry Wallace sort to do that."

Early in 1934 Anderson accepted a commission from Raymond Moley, brainstruster and editor of *Today*, to travel throughout America, talking to the people in an effort to understand the national mood. The resulting series of articles, written during 1934 and early 1935, appeared in *Today* and were later collected in the volume *Puzzled America*, published in 1935. In introducing the collection Anderson characterized the real power behind the jaunty, defiant upthrust of the cigarette holder as Franklin Roosevelt was swept into the White House and kept there by such great majorities.

> We are the people who passed through the World War . . . the Harding and the Coolidge times . . . As a people we are now fed up on it all.
>
> We do not want cynicism. We want belief.

In his trips through the South and the Midwest, the regions that Anderson knew so well, he found that belief, in the towns, the villages, and on the farms. People were puzzled, of course, often confused, but they felt that they were building a new, humanized society to replace the old. Anderson was especially impressed by the spirit in the C.C.C. camps and among the workers at T.V.A., where the sense of purpose and accomplishment manifested itself in tangible results. Anderson concluded the volume on a note of hope that the goal of the times would be reached.

> You in America, in spite of all the desperate position you may now be in, may be again what you were. You were

> once the hope of the world, the place to which the oppressed came. You may be it again . . . There must be one strong land in the world to which no dictator comes, to which the creeping fear does not come.

The results of the movement Anderson made his own have become history: America, behind the man who was the symbol of hope, grew into a land that would be unrecognized by William McKinley or, for that matter, is still unrecognized by Herbert Hoover. Like Hoover, Anderson maintained that America was fundamentally sound, but he and Hoover were talking about two different Americas. Hoover's faith was in the economic system and its concurrent paternalism that had rewarded him so greatly; Anderson's was in the strength of the people to do the things that they had to do and to find dignity and faith in the process.

Like most of his liberal contemporaries Anderson did not foresee the direction that the New Deal was to take as it found so much expression on the material level because things are much more easily manipulated than ideas. Nor did he anticipate the war and the following materialistic binge that has been so faithfully reflected in apathy and purposelessness in high places. Instead, at his death in 1941 he was still convinced that America was moving into a new age dominated by the recognition of the dignity and worth of mankind. Perhaps, however, if the ideals of the New Frontier are transmuted into action, he may yet be right.

CHAPTER X

SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S MOMENTS OF INSIGHT

In 1919 Sherwood Anderson published *Winesburg, Ohio*, a collection of short stories and sketches written between 1915 and 1917. During those years he had been under the influence of the Chicago Renaissance, a literary movement that was essentially romantic in nature, seeking liberation from the confines of the old literary forms and styles and emphasizing new subject matter, new techniques, and a new personal and artistic freedom from the machine-made culture that had come to dominate America. *Winesburg, Ohio* is perhaps the outstanding simple literary work that resulted from those years of rebellion, and its publication marked the emergence of Sherwood Anderson as a serious, native Midwestern literary artist. In it he had rejected the dissemination of propaganda and social protest that marred his earlier novels, *Windy McPherson's Son* and *Marching Men;* he went far beyond the liberating self-expression of his verse in *Mid-American Chants;* and he produced a mature work of literary art.

In the *Winesburg, Ohio* achievement, relationships to Anderson's earlier work are immediately apparent: in subject matter he re-

turned to the small Midwestern town that had provided the background for the earlier parts of *Windy McPherson's Son;* in theme he was primarily concerned with the isolation of the individual as he had been to a lesser extent in the first two novels; and in technique he combined his natural Midwestern style with the short form that he had been experimenting with in the short stories published in *The Little Review*. But to say that Anderson merely combined all these factors and emerged with a major literary achievement is to over-simplify to an unacceptable degree; there is no intermediate work between his earlier unsuccessful attempts and *Winesburg, Ohio* that would show that Anderson was consciously striving for the literary effect that he achieved in the volume.

Anderson himself attempted to account for the abrupt shift from mediocre to substantial achievement several times, most recently and in detail in his *Memoirs*. According to him the first of the stories, "Hands", was written in its entirety at one sitting as the result of a moment of intense emotional excitement. For days he had been sitting at the window of his room in his boarding house, watching people pass by. "Somehow it had seemed to me . . . that each person who passed along the street below . . . shouted his secret up to me. I was myself and still I felt out of myself. It seemed to me that I went into the others."

This must have been just before or shortly after he had completed the *Mid-American Chants* volume, in the writing of which he had consciously and deliberately released in himself a spontaneous lyricism produced by emotional release and the desire to probe deeply into the meanings of things as reflected in himself. At this time, as in the past, even in the years in Cleveland and Elyria, he found himself drawn strongly to the people with whom he felt so much sympathy. He was "Trying for something. To escape out of old minds, old thoughts put into my head by others, into my own thoughts, my own feelings." Thus far what he had been attempting was very much in keeping with the spirit of the Chicago Liberation, to look into his own heart and to understand others through himself, as he had emphasized in his

essay "The New Note" a year or so before. Now he wanted to go farther:

> To at last go out of myself, truly into others, the others I met constantly in the streets of the city, in the office where I then worked, and still others, remembered out of my childhood in an American small town.

Suddenly it happened. He went to his table and wrote, finishing "Hands" at one sitting, knowing when he had finished that it was right, that he had captured the essence of ". . . a poor little man, beaten, pounded, frightened by the world in which he lived into something oddly beautiful". When he knew that it was right, he knew also that he had found both himself and his voca'ion, "getting for the first time belief in self". In the succeeding days and weeks he finished the rest of the stories, writing furiously in his room, at work, or wherever he could find a moment.

Whether this account is factually correct or not really doesn't matter. What had happened was that Anderson had attained artistic insight in a form eminently suited to his own peculiar talents for attaining empathy with other human beings. It is not a thing which can be sustained for long periods of time, certainly not throughout a novel, although flashes of it occur in almost all of his following novels, but in the short forms it is superb. He found, almost by accident, the form best suited for his ability, one in which he could fuse sympathy, insight, and lyrical excitement, and in the process lose consciousness of himself in the production of the work.

The last phrase contains the key to Anderson's achievement in the ensuing volume. In his earlier works Anderson had been dealing with himself, directly in the case of Sam McPherson in *Windy McPherson's Son* and vicariously in the figure of Beaut McGregor in *Marching Men*. Here he used the fruits of his personal experience as he had in the novels, but his experiment in *Mid-American Chants* had shown him that mere experience was not enough, that there was something beyond it. In *Winesburg, Ohio* he went beyond his own experience into an intuitive perception of the experiences of others.

Hence, in dealing with other human lives he has passed the surface appearance of each and caught it at a moment that reveals its essence. As he commented, it is as though each person had shouted his secret up to him. Each story is a moment in the life of the central figure, but in that moment Anderson reveals the secret that made that life what it was.

Incorporating these isolated moments of insight into an integrated whole presents a problem in categorizing the volume into one of the convenient pigeonholes of literary convention. It has been called both a novel and a collection of short stories, and Anderson himself always called each element a story, but in its entirety he considered it a novel in a form invented by himself rather than in the derivative form of his earlier works. In the *Memoirs* he recalls that

> I have even sometimes thought that the novel form does not fit an American writer, that it is a form which had been brought in. What is wanted is a new looseness; and in *Winesburg* I have made my own form. There were individual tales but all about lives in some way connected. By this method I did succeed, I think, in giving the feeling of the life of a boy growing into young manhood in a town. Life is a loose flowing thing. There are no plot stories in life. I had begun writing of the little lives I knew, the people I had lived, walked and talked with . . .

Again, whether this new form was a conscious contrivance at the time, as Anderson here indicates it was, or not makes very little difference. The form is, as he comments, a loose one, having elements that draw the stories together, but within the unity thus imposed, there is the diversity inherent in the dozens of lives portrayed, each of them different from the others, and all of them different from Anderson's own. The result is in a very real sense Anderson's first work that is undeniably fiction rather than autobiography.

The difficulty in ascribing a conventional category to the volume has resulted in a number of mistaken interpretations of the work, the most common being that Anderson is showing a cross section of a small town, revealing its secret sins in such detail that he is in effect "revolting from the village", as Carl Van Doren and

Russell Blankenship have commented. Although this was an early attempt to categorize the book, the generality has endured, in spite of the fact that it is far from what Anderson had either intended or accomplished. Anderson was not writing about any particular social setting, nor was he attacking the social structure as he had in his earlier works. Rather he was writing about people, exploring deeply and in detail individual human lives in the attempt to set aside the barriers of human isolation and to discover them as individuals, at the same time discovering whatever it was that had erected those barriers. That the individuals he portrays are not unique products either of the small town or of the large city but common to both is demonstrated by his own statement that many of the characterizations came from ". . . everywhere about me, in towns in which I had lived, in the army, in factories and offices", and, as William Phillips' study shows, from Clyde and Elyria. The work is a composite, drawing for its substance on all of Anderson's experience; but it is not an attempt to describe or to explain any one. Anderson had left such attempts behind him as a result of what he had learned from writing the novels.

The book is in essence an exploration of the problem of human isolation; however, it does not approach the problem from the sweeping social-structure centered view of the earlier novels but from a much narrower point of view. Anderson had learned that isolation is not merely a product of modern materialism, as he had implied in *Marching Men*, but that it originates in a narrowness of human vision and an inability or in some cases an unwillingness to grapple with and attempt to understand the complexities of human life and experience. These shortcomings result in a self-centered world that precludes the understanding of others. His earlier protagonists, failing to realize this truth, had been unable to penetrate the barriers of isolation because they were attempting to approach others as extensions of themselves rather than as individuals; hence they became caricatures of the epic figures they might have been. In the short stories of this volume Anderson narrowed his field and determined to treat isolation as a pheno-

menon of the individual in an individual sense rather than as a manifestation of a social evil. That it cannot be cured by an all-embracing remedy, he learned from *Marching Men*, just as *Windy McPherson's Son* taught him that it cannot be understood by a direct, determined approach. In *Winesburg, Ohio*, Anderson approached the problem in its simplest individual terms, seeking understanding through intuitive perception of the essence of individuality.

In the first of the sketches. "The Book of the Grotesque", utilized as a statement of purpose, Anderson points out his approach in symbolic terms. As the title indicates, he shows that the individuals he is dealing with in the stories have each been twisted into psychological shapes having, in most cases, little to do with external appearance. This distortion results from both the narrowness of their own vision and that of others; in some cases the first is primarily at fault, while in others it is the latter. From this point the problem inherent in human isolation takes on two aspects: the first is, of course, the specific cause in individual cases; the second and more important is determining with exactness and hence understanding the nature of each grotesque. Thus, in the book he is approaching the understanding that Sam McPherson sought in a way that demands empathy, compassion, and intuition rather than fierce desire.

In this sketch, which characterizes an old writer who has attained understanding of his fellow men and has retired from life to observe men and to teach them understanding, Anderson defines his problem symbolically because he has learned that there is no direct, obvious cause but that there are causes as diverse as the individuals who make up the world. In the sketch the old writer reveals his secret knowledge of the nature of mankind, noting

> That in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and they were all beautiful.
>
> . . . There was the truth of virginity and the truth of wealth and of poverty, of thrift and of profligacy, of carelessness

> and abandon. Hundreds and hundreds . . . were the truths and they were all beautiful.
>
> And then the people came along. Each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths and some who were quite strong snatched up a dozen of them.
>
> It was the truths that made the people grotesques . . . the moment that one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.

Using this symbolic interpretation as a basis, Anderson sets off to use intuitive perception to try to find in the lives of the people with whom he is dealing whatever it is in themselves that has prevented them from reaching their full potential as human beings and that has cut them off from their fellows. He shows, too, his realization that the cause is not something as easily perceived and denounced as modern industrialism but that it is as old as the human race. False ideas, false dreams, false hopes, and false goals have distorted man's vision almost from the beginning. Anderson is attempting in the stories to approach these people who have had such indignities inflicted upon them as to become spiritual grotesques, and most importantly, he is attempting to understand them as people rather than as curious specimens of spiritual deformity.

Anderson's use of the word grotesque is quite important in this context. In its usual sense in reference to human beings it connotes disgust or revulsion, but Anderson's use is quite different. To him a grotesque is, as he points out later, like the twisted apples that are left behind in the orchards because they are imperfect. These apples, he says, are the sweetest of all, perhaps even because of the imperfections that have caused them to be rejected. He approaches the people in his stories as he does the apples, secure in his knowledge that the sources or natures of their deformities are unimportant when compared to their intrinsic worth as human beings needing and deserving of understanding. This approach is based on intuition rather than objective knowledge, and it is the same sort of intuition with which one approaches the twisted

apples; he believes that one dare not reject because of mere appearance, either physical or spiritual; that appearance may mask a significant experience made more intense and more worthwhile by the deformity itself.

In the body of the book proper, following this introductory sketch, Anderson has set up an organizational pattern that not only gives partial unity to the book but explores systematically the diverse origins of the isolation of his people, each of whom is in effect a social displaced person because he is cut off from human intercourse with his fellow human beings. In the first three stories Anderson deals with three aspects of the problem of human isolation. The first story, "Hands", deals with the inability to communicate feeling; the second, "Paper Pills", is devoted to the inability to communicate thought; and the third, "Mother", focuses on the inability to communicate love. This threephased examination of the basic problem of human isolation sets the tone for the rest of the book because these three shortcomings, resulting partially from the narrowness of the vision of each central figure but primarily from the lack of sympathy with which the contemporaries of each regard him, are the real creators of the grotesques in human nature. Each of the three characters has encountered one aspect of the problem: he has something that he feels is vital and real within himself that he wants desperately to reveal to others, but in each case he is rebuffed, and turning in upon himself, he becomes a bit more twisted and worn spiritually. But, like the apples left in the orchards, he is the sweeter, the more human for it. In each case the inner vision of the main character remains clear, and the thing that he wishes to communicate is in itself good, but his inability to break through the shell that prevents him from talking to others results in misunderstanding and spiritual tragedy.

The first of the stories, "Hands", immediately and symbolically approaches a problem that as a phase of the overall problem of human isolation recurs in Anderson's later work. The story begins by describing the remarkably active and expressive hands of an old recluse in the town. George Willard, a young reporter on the

Winesburg *Eagle* and the unifying figure in the stories, is fascinated by the old man's hands, and in time the old man tells Willard his story: once, as a schoolmaster, he had been accused of homosexuality because in moments of excitement or affection he would tousle the hair of his students or touch them. Instead of being a means of expression, the old man's hands had become a source of shame to him, and he tried to keep them hidden. In the town he is a pitiful and fearful creature, always expecting the spontaneous actions of his hands to be misinterpreted.

The concept of hands as the basic tools of expression of the craftsman is very important in this story as it passes beyond the immediate and takes on overtones of the universal. As Anderson points out with increasing frequency during both this and the next periods of his career, man's efforts to communicate with his fellows have traditionally depended upon his hands because for many things words either do not exist or have been rendered meaningless. Hence, the hands of a craftsman, a painter, a surgeon, a writer, a lover communicate indirectly something of the truth and beauty that each of them feels inside. Although Anderson is fascinated by the idea, nevertheless he knows that the language of hands is as subject to misinterpretation as any other. In this story he points out that this is not only possible, but it is probable, that the widely-held truth in this case, the existence of homosexuality, has become a falsehood because appearance has been accepted in place of truth. Symbolically he shows how such widely-held truths become falsehoods have inhibited the forces in man that allow him to express himself intimately and creatively. Fortunately, however, he shows that the forces still exist, making their possessor the more human and the more deserving of compassion, because he has been deprived of the power to express his creativity.

In "Paper Pills" Anderson again writes of the relationship between a man's hands and his inner being, this time in the person of Doctor Reefy, a conventionally wise and perceptive country practitioner. Doctor Reefy is as cut off from effective communication with others as Wing Biddlebaum, but his prob-

lem is his inability to communicate his thoughts without being misunderstood. Because he recognizes this shortcoming, he writes his thoughts on bits of paper and puts the bits into his pockets, where they become twisted into hard little balls, which he throws playfully at his friend the nurseryman as he laughs.

Here Anderson carries further his introductory comment that there is no such thing as a truth, that there are only thoughts, and that man has made truths out of them through his own short sight. On the bits of paper Doctor Reefy knows that he is writing mere thoughts, but he knows that they would be misinterpreted if communicated directly, so to prevent them being reduced to the grim joke of misinterpretation he prefers that they become the means of a lesser joke in the form of paper pills. Cut off from attempts at direct communication through his knowledge of its inevitable misinterpretation, Doctor Reefy prefers that his paper pills be considered as bits of paper and no more; in effect, the hard shells of the pills represent the barriers of isolation that surround human minds, and Doctor Reefy, voluntarily isolating himself rather than trying to overcome those barriers, deliberately avoids inevitable misunderstanding.

Waldo Frank sees this story as representing the ineffectuality of human thought as it is isolated and fragmented on the bits of paper, but Anderson indicates no such shortcoming in the thoughts themselves. The difficulty, he points out, lies in the process of communication, which, as Reefy indicates, is something that cannot be carried out directly with any assurance of success. Rather than risk misinterpretation, he lets the paper pills be considered products of his hands rather than his mind. Yet, even while he throws them playfully at his friend, he hopes that his friend will see them in the light in which every craftsman hopes his work will be regarded—as a product that has taken shape through the work of his hands but that is expressive of his soul. Reefy knows that this intuitive understanding is as unlikely as direct understanding, and so he lets himself become a grotesque because he is unable to find a satisfactory means of communication. The shortcoming lies not in the thought but in the process

of communication, and he prefers to convey his thoughts ironically in the form of a joke, even while he knows that faulty communication of the intimacies of human life is life's inherent tragedy.

The third story, "Mother", deals with the relationship between George Willard and his mother, Elizabeth Willard. In effect the story is the exploration of a theme that Anderson had adapted from his own experience and used in both *Windy McPherson's Son* and *Marching Men:* the inability to communicate love or understanding between mother and son. The relationship between the two is completely inarticulate, just as it was between mother and son in each of the novels and, more importantly, as Anderson's autobiographies show, as was the case between him and his own mother. As a result, although this phase is part of the overall problem of isolation, Anderson feels that understanding in this area is vital. As the theme unfolds in this story, Elizabeth has been forced, through the ineptness of her husband, to take over management of both the family hotel, a failing business, and the inner affairs of the family proper. She is resented by her husband as a usurper, and unable to love or respect him, she focuses her interest and love on her son, in whom she sees the potential for the individual fulfillment that her role as woman and as head of the household had denied her. Inwardly she was a mass of determination that violently defied anything that threatened her son; outwardly she was perfunctory, almost apologetic in his presence.

Consequently Elizabeth is continually afraid that her life, spent in opposing both the forces of conventional success and her husband, with her son as the stake, is indecisive and meaningless. She can only hope that somehow the boy understands. Finally he announces that he is going away: "I just want to go away and look at people and think." She is unable to reply, but she knows that she has won; "She wanted to cry out with joy . . . but the expression of joy had become impossible to her", and the story ends in perfunctory formality, the barriers still solid between them.

In these three stories Anderson sets forth the theme of the problem of human isolation in the three aspects that recur in

most of the other stories. These three aspects, the inability to communicate one's feeling, one's thought, and one's love, are at the heart of the problem, and in the following stories he shows these shortcomings at work in other situations with other central characters but essentially as restatements of the same theme. In each of the characters something deep within him demands expression. In each case it is part of him that he wants desperately to share with others directly, and he is unable to do it, either through his own inability to break through the shell that surrounds him or else because society forbids it or distorts it. This inability makes him turn in upon himself, becoming a grotesque, a person deserving of understanding and wanting it desperately, but completely unable to find it except in occasional flashes, as in the embrace between Elizabeth and Doctor Reefy in "Death" and in the attempts made by many of them to seek understanding in George Willard. However, such moments merely serve to emphasize the intensity of their isolation as they are startled by a noise or as George misunderstands or fails to understand and leaves them behind in frustration.

As George Willard appears and reappears in about half of the stories as leading character, as an audience, or as a casual observer he lends a unity to the collection that makes it approach the novel form. Much more important, however, is his role in permitting full development of Anderson's theme. In two of the first three stories, "Hands" and "Mother", he plays the part that has been ascribed to him in more than half of the following stories. To each of the grotesques he appears to be what that individual wants him to be. To his mother he is an extension of herself through which her dreams may be fulfilled; to Wing Biddlebaum he is the symbol of the innocent love that had been denied him; to others he becomes, in turn, a symbol of a long-lost son, of father-confessor, of masculine strength and fertility, of innocent, undemanding human understanding. Each interprets George as he wishes, but to each he primarily serves the function of an ear into which can be poured the inner stirrings of fear, hope, love, and dreams of which each is made. Because he

is part of the apparently integrated community in his job as reporter on the Winesburg *Eagle,* he represents to each of them the opportunity to restore communication with the world from which each feels excluded. These grotesques see in George the key that will release them from their personal prisons and enable them to resume normal human forms, either vicariously, as in the case of his mother and others, or directly, through understanding, acceptance, and love. Because George is innocent, unspoiled by the world that has rejected and isolated them, they see in him their only chance to return to the fellowship of men.

As a result, Wing Biddlebaum feels confident in his presence and is willing to walk freely with him through the town; his mother feels a sudden surge of strength in his presence; Doctor Parcival feels confident enough to reveal the secret behind his mask of hate—the overwhelming compassion that makes him declare that "... everyone in the world is Christ and they are all crucified"; Louise Trunnion in "Nobody Knows" seeks him out for a moment of love that manifests itself in sex. In following stories the role of George Willard parallels these. He is sought out, he receives confidences, he is receptive and sympathetic, and the grotesques for the most part go away momentarily satisfied, unaware that while they have found temporary release, they have not found freedom from the confines of their spiritual prisons.

Only in "Queer", the story of Elmer Cowley, does the grotesque resent the person of George Willard. Just as the others have seen Willard as the symbol of whatever will free them from their isolation, Elmer sees George as the manifestation of the society that rejects him. In this story Elmer resents George and yet attempts to establish satisfactory relations with him. Failing this, he assaults George, leaving him behind bewildered and half-conscious. As he hops a freight, Elmer voices his frustration by crying, "I guess I showed him. I ain't so queer. I guess I showed him I ain't so queer."

In this story Elmer Cowley points out the difficulty that the other grotesques thus far have failed to perceive: George Willard does not understand. All of the others had seen him as an exten-

sion of self that could not fail to understand and that could ease their passage into the intimacies of human life, and each believed that he did somehow understand, even as he left in sympathy but baffled or, as in the case of Louise Trunnion, completely misunderstanding. But Elmer sees him as society, as the symbol of rejection, and finding himself tongue-tied in George's presence, he can do nothing else but assault George and then run off, defiant but defeated. Elmer sees that George as society does not understand, while the others fail to see that as son, as lover, as mirrored self, he does not understand either.

As the grotesques reveal themselves to George, they do not arouse in him the conventional understanding that they seek, but without realizing it, each of them is contributing to the growth of a more important kind of understanding in him. This kind is based on compassion and on the sincere desire to understand what these people are trying to tell him, and it does not result from objective analysis but from intuitive perception of the nature and worth of the individual. As the stories unfold he is still too young and inexperienced to grasp much more than that, but his contacts with the grotesques are drawing him closer to eventual understanding through teaching him the compassion and the empathy that will permit him in time to know and understand others.

In the development of George Willard. Anderson indicates that one can learn to seek out moments of understanding, of acceptance, of communication without the use of words that can be twisted, distorted, or misunderstood. Early in the collection George had completely misinterpreted a lonely plea, mistaking it for an invitation to a sex adventure; later, with Kate Swift he almost makes the same mistake, finally realizing that "I must have missed something. I have missed something Kate Swift was trying to tell me;" and finally, in "Sophistication" his brief meeting with Helen White brought him to realize that sex and love are not synonymous but that they are often confused. This realization makes possible for him the eventual achievement of understanding. In the process he has learned something of the nature of the human heart, both of others and of his own, and he has learned

to open his heart and to listen with it rather than with ears that have become too accustomed to the sound of the truths become falsehoods all around him.

The sketch "Departure" is for George anti-climax. In the microcosm of human nature that is Winesburg he had learned the fundamental secret of human society: that one must reach out and accept and love; he had ". . . for a moment taken hold of the thing that makes the mature life of men and women in the modern world possible"; and he is ready to take his place in that world, taking with him something of each of the grotesques who had sought him out. As long as he remembers that secret he can never become one of them; he knows that understanding comes only in moments of uncomplicated acceptance and love.

Willard's two-fold position in the volume goes well beyond the obvious factor of providing a unifying figure and becomes the means through which thematic development becomes apparent. Human isolation can be overcome and man can take his place in an understanding relationship with his fellows, but such understanding can only come about through intuitive perception of the others as human beings. The normal processes of direct communication are useless; what is needed are increasing and deliberate efforts to attain empathy with others through compassion, through love, and above all, through the process of one's own intuition. That this can be learned Anderson shows through the evolution of Willard's experience from complete misunderstanding through increasing awareness and finally into a state where understanding and fulfillment become possible, at least momentarily. For this, however, conditions of receptivity must be right; that is, the truths become falsehoods disseminated by society must have been driven from the consciousness.

In his progress from misunderstanding to intuitive insight George Willard's development parallels that of Anderson himself, and in this sense Willard is an autobiographical figure. In his own career Anderson had followed the same path. From misunderstanding and grasping at single truths and rendering them false as he pursued a business career, he had become increasingly aware

of others and of the desire to understand them, while he let his business career go to pieces. Then, as shown in the pages of *Winesburg, Ohio*, he found the secret of intuitive communication with the inner lives of others. As he has pointed out in the *Memoirs* he had begun to write hoping to find understanding; after the false starts that he made in the novels when he had mistakenly focused on himself and on the world and had failed to find understanding, he turned away from self into others and had finally begun to find the understanding he had been seeking.

However, *Winesburg, Ohio* must not be interpreted as merely an exposition of the theme of human isolation, nor must it be seen primarily either in the light of a young man learning about life or as a symbolic representation of Anderson's acquisition of the powers of intuitive perception. The book's chief merit is that it is about people. Willard's role is secondary to the people about whom each individual story centres. Whereas the leading character in each of the novels was clearly Anderson himself, either as disillusioned seeker or as fulfilled hero, in this work his role is minor, and he has gone beyond himself and into the lives of others. Each character has elements in common with the others and with Willard, just as all men share the common bonds of humanity, but in each case the character is primarily an individual, differing from the others and, of course, from Anderson himself in all the idiosyncrasies that make up human character. For the first time Anderson was attempting to write fiction rather than disguised autobiography, and the breadth of individuality in the stories shows the success of the attempt.

Characterization in the stories is not fully developed, however. In the *Memoirs* Anderson points out that "... *Winesburg, Ohio* tried to tell the story of the defeated figures of an old American individualistic small town life ..." and in this phrase he points out what he was trying to do and at the same time he sheds lights on both characterization and structural technique of the individual stories. The limitations in Anderson's statement account for the fact that although each character was an individual, each was primarily defined by one controlling characteristic that provided

both the key to his character and to the nature of his grotesqueness.

More importantly, however, from the point of view of Anderson's narrative technique, each key characteristic was easily definable in a moment of the author's insight into the individuality of the person concerned. Thus, in the stories in which George Willard is absent or makes brief, unimportant appearances, Anderson utilizes not only theme and background to tie the stories into the unified collection, but he uses the same technique of a revealing moment to permit the reader to grasp both the nature of the individual's isolation and his controlling characteristic as an individual, at the same time effectively strengthening the unified structure of the whole. In "Godliness" he shows Jesse Bentley as a God-intoxicated man who sees in himself the reincarnation of an Old Testament patriarch; in "The Untold Lie" Ray Pearson is depicted as a man who has discovered the futility of judging an act absolutely; "Respectability" pictures a man who seeks love but finds it perverted into sex; "The Strength of God" shows a minister who renews his faith through an unconscious distortion of his own inner drives.

Each of the characters can be revealed in a phrase because each of them carries within himself the complicating factor that provides the framework for the story. But this does not mean that characterization in the stories is slight or simple; it does mean, however, that the characterizations are primarily based upon depth rather than breadth, and each is a narrow area deeply explored, with the emphasis placed upon the uniqueness of that basic trait.

This concept of characterization leads directly into the narrative technique that Anderson has employed in the stories. There are no carefully-constructed plots, sequences of significant incidents, or patterns of rising or falling action. Rather, the stories are character-plotted, and each consists of the revelation of the character core that is the essense of the central figure's being. Outside events in the stories are normally of little or no importance except as they provide opportunity for this revelation, and in effect

Anderson has primarily been providing opportunity for his reader to peer deeply into a man's soul as he puts his stories together. In each, this is but the work of a moment, sometimes handled in a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph, but in that brief moment Anderson has revealed, with his sincere compassion, the deepest secret of each character's being, the fear, the frustration, or the love or hope that he kept within himself, often afraid to reveal it.

In combining this method of characterization with an intuitive approach to its ultimate revelation Anderson has provided in the stories a series of moments of insight, each of them designed to provide a brief, intuitive, but true glimpse of the anguish of the human heart. Although his interest in psychoanalysis had been increasing during the Chicago years, he does not use the techniques of artificially induced self-revelation nor does he reveal for the sake of reaching objective conclusions. Rather the technique that he employs is intuitive perception accomplished not through analysis but through empathy, and his purpose is not to diagnose and to cure but simply to understand and to love. The stories are not literary psychiatrists' couches; they are vehicles by which Anderson as craftsman can express the insight into individual aspects of human nature as it has been revealed to him through the intuitive approach that he as artist feels is valid in artistic interpretation.

In attempting to measure the achievement of *Winesburg, Ohio* critics have evolved numerous conflicting theories. Some, such as Russell Blankenship, contemporary with the publication of the work, saw it as naturalistic or realistic; in the thirties Oscar Cargill called it primitivistic; and more recently James Schevill has seen in it an elaborate structure designed "... to replace the myth of the small town Christian virtues with the myth of the grotesque ..." by showing "... the sexual and imaginative frustrations of the townspeople." This continued attention to the volume indicates the respect that critics have for it and their realization that Anderson has accomplished a substantial piece of work in writing it, but the resulting contradictions indicate the difficulty of ascribing satisfactory categories to or providing acceptable explanations

for a complex literary work. The categories of realism or naturalism are unsatisfactory as an examination of Anderson's technique and theme shows clearly. Anderson is not expounding the theory of a universe of mechanistic forces operating on his people as the term naturalism would indicate, but he is showing the essense of their humanity. Neither does he depend for effect upon the constant and careful accumulation of sharply drawn detail in the tradition of realism, but rather he sketches, he implies, he insinuates, and he reveals insights in order to arrive at delineation of character and of situation that is inward rather than external. Both of these categories are unsatisfactory because the stories cannot be twisted or distorted to meet the demands even of loose application of the terms, while primitivism is a catch-all phrase that attempts to categorize by subject matter, ignoring what Anderson was trying to say.

The interpretation of the work as an attempt to construct an elaborate American myth is an unnecessary complication that never occured to Anderson in any of his published remarks on the book. Rather, as Anderson conceived and wrote the book and as the completed work shows, he was not writing about society in the aggregate, either realistically or in the symbolic structure of mythology. He was not writing about society at all; he was writing about people. Each of his people is conceived and presented as an individual rather than as merely another manifestation of society. That he is part of the social structure is important only insofar as every individual is part of that structure, and Anderson was not merely interested in treating the individual in terms of that relationship; he was interested in treating the individual as human being.

Winesburg, Ohio is the book that provides the solid foundation of Anderson's literary reputation in times of disfavor as well as of favor, and his accomplishment in the work is impressive. It is not a book of rebellion as were his earlier works of fiction; instead, it is an affirmation of Anderson's belief in the durability of the human spirit and of the compassion that he felt was needed at the heart of human relations. In it Anderson has examined the

problem of human isolation, not in the hope of curing, but in the certainty of his belief that understanding of men is important because man himself is important individually as well as collectively. In doing so he points the way toward further understanding, hoping that barriers among men can be removed. However, understanding, he points out, must come first, not only because it may eliminate barriers, but more importantly because to know other human beings is to love them, and love is the essence of life.

In the process he examines many specific instances of human isolation, recognizing diversity in both kind and degree and showing understanding of the nature of the problem far greater than that he had shown in the two novels. This major shift in approach indicates that he was consciously avoiding the mistake of over-simplification as he became writer rather than propagandist or panacea seeker. His most important discovery, however, was his realization that human isolation stems primarily from entirely human shortcomings, those inherent in sex, in inarticulateness, in ". . . the old brutal ignorance that had in it also a kind of beautiful childlike innocence . . .", and even in deliberate cruelty. For its victims he had hope as well as compassion because, however seriously they might be distorted, nevertheless they were reaching out, aware that others existed and hoping that somehow they might be able to establish communication. Occasionally, however, when he perceived that the new materialism was making inroads among the people, as in "Godliness" and in "Queer", and the central figures were isolated by greed, flashes of the old Anderson shine through. For these people he had contempt, and compassion and hope are replaced by irony that rises at times, as in "Queer", to ludicrousness.

In an examination of *Winesburg, Ohio* in the light of Anderosn's previous works a number of revealing factors come to light. In the first place, he has not shifted abruptly from the thematic focus of the previous works, but a gradual shifting of thematic focus has taken place. The theme of human isolation in *Winesburg, Ohio* is a direct and logical result of the shift that had evidently

been taking place in Anderson's thinking. In both *Windy McPherson's Son* and *Marching Men* Anderson had started with the premise that the effect of industrialism on the individual was to isolate him. In the former Sam McPherson's acceptance of the concepts of materialism had completely cut him off from others, and half of the novel is devoted to his attempts to find his way back into human society. But his direct efforts are futile, and his final decision that it can only be done through love of others is vague and unsatisfactory and his concept of intimate relations with other human beings carries with it too much of the air of Madison Avenue togetherness. But in spite of its vagueness, the ending points out the direction that Anderson was to take in his efforts to find fulfillment through understanding his fellows.

In *Marching Men* Anderson attempted to reduce the vagueness of this ending to concrete terms. His villain was still industrialism and its destructive effects on the human qualities of individuals, but he attempted to break down the barriers of spiritual isolation among men by forging physical bonds among them, hoping that as a result the villain would be overcome and spiritual ties would grow also. Again, however, Anderson indicated in the end that he knew too little of the nature of the problem he was dealing with; such an easy solution, he realized, is primarily the result of wishful thinking and it is no solution at all; instead it raises other problems. Both of his early frontal assaults on the problem had proved futile, and a change of focus rather than problem became necessary.

Md-American Chants represents this pause to re-examine both his own position and the validity of his original thesis. His own position had changed and he had found himself as writer; his point of view had been narrowed and deepened; and his realization grew that the problem of human isolation is not manifested in social movements but in individual circumstances in human lives. Combining these three factors he found that a new approach was necessary, that individuals cannot be categorized or manipulated as easily as he had thought. Using the symbol of the strong, fertile corn that does not seek to interpret, explain, or

exploit its existence and its relationships but merely accepts them, he showed that man, too, can only be approached in the same intuitive, compassionate, and accepting manner. At this point, although his basic problem remained the same, his approach to that problem became an effort to understand rather than to generalize and cure.

Winesburg, Ohio was Anderson's attempt to incorporate this lesson in human terms. In a much looser form than that permitted by the conventional novel and yet unified by theme, by technique, and by the gradual emergence of intuitive understanding in George Willard, Anderson narrowed the range of human isolation from a manifestation of society to a characteristic of individuals. In the process he probed much more deeply than he had in the past, and he found that dehumanized materialism is only a symptom of a much older and much more serious human malady. Although he still condemned the isolation that results from the worship of things, he demonstrated many more basic isolating factors in human life: simple inarticulateness; the shortcomings of words as media of communication; the fallacies of class and of status; the misinterpretations which society makes, especially in the meaning behind sexual differences; and the confusion of spiritual seeking with sexual desire. All these, as he shows in the collection, can only be understood in individual rather than societal terms.

These factors, he points out, cannot be overcome by specific remedies; they can only be approached and penetrated through intuitive understanding and compassion. That this technique can be learned he demonstrates in the figure of George Willard. Anderson has not sought to erect a myth of the grotesque; he has sought to demonstrate that the grotesque is a human being, an individual who can be understood if one is willing to make the effort to learn the technique. The false gods, the isolated thoughts become truths become falsehoods, cannot be easily overcome; they can only be overthrown through intuitive perception of the worth of each individual, through understanding, and through mutual seeking.

Winesburg, Ohio is not an isolated work as some critics maintain, standing apart from Anderson's earlier works. Although as a work of literary art it is far superior to them, the thematic relationship, actually an intensification, is readily apparent. Equally apparent are stylistic and structural relationships. The rhetorical awkwardness that was so apparent in *Windy McPherson's Son* has almost disappeared, but it was becoming less conspicious in *Marching Men* and it received its final blows in *Mid-American Chants.* Conversely the experimentation with the natural rhythms of American speech that he had conducted in the previous work has in *Winesburg* become his major stylistic characteristic, pointing toward his later mastery of the reproduction of the oral story-telling tradition that halts, digresses, becomes seemingly irrelevant at times, and yet proceeds swiftly toward a carefully defined climax and impact. Conversations have become almost entirely natural, the flat Midwestern tones naturally reproduced replacing the earlier imitative and artificial rhetorical flourishes. Characterization has deepened in contrast to the earlier surface treatment, and storytelling technique has become carefully controlled and orderly when compared to the formlessness of the earlier works. In the book as a whole and in most of the individual stories there is evidence of a plan. In *Winesburg, Ohio* Anderson knew where he was going, and he was consciously aware of the implications and ramifications of his theme. Each of the stories is a manifestation of that theme, and through the regular appearance of George Willard, the solution to the problem of human isolation becomes increasingly closer as George approaches eventual understanding.

In addition Anderson uses the technique of framing the collection by using sketches at the beginning and the end both to document his thesis and to further aid structural unity. "The Book of the Grotesque" sets up the problem of human isolation and presents its origins in symbolic terms; "Departure" shows that these shortcomings, made real in the stories, are not insurmountable, that there is hope if the individual seeks out the basis of understanding among men.

With the publication of *Winesburg, Ohio* Anderson had achieved full stature as a writer, but it was not a stature that could remain static. Rather the book marks both the close of the earliest period in his writing career and the beginning of the second. It represents the culmination of his discovery of his own particular talents and his own view of individual lives, and it points out the directions that his future works were to take, two directions that are diametrically opposed, one of them looking backward in time at the American past, and the other forward into the age of industrialism that formerly had been his prime interest.

In pointing to the past that Anderson was to become increasingly concerned with both in later works and in his own life, the volume is permeated with an air of nostalgia, a wished-for return to a state of human society that was uncomplicated, that was characterized not only as "brutal ignorance" but also and more importantly, ". . . a kind of beautiful childlike innocence [that] is gone forever." Coupled with this is, of course, the realization that the past is not perfect, nor did Anderson want it so. He realized, as did one of his people, ". . . the fact that many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg". However, in a world less complicated, less dehumanized than the age of industrialism, he believed that understanding could be more easily achieved. As a whole, the book nostalgically evokes the memory of a way of life that is gone, and as George Willard looks back from the train he sees that ". . . the town of Winesburg had disappeared, and his life there had become but a background upon which to paint the dreams of his manhood".

CHAPTER XI

SHERWOOD ANDERSON'S LARGER VIEW

In 1919 Sherwood Anderson completed *Winesburg, Ohio* in which he focused on individual human lives during that late nineteenth century period just before industrialism began to dominate the Ohio countryside. It was, as he wrote then, the time of "... the old brutal ignorance that had in it also a kind of beautiful child-like innocence that is gone forever." It was gone forever, he knew, because the Clyde, Ohios, of the Midwest had taken their place in the ranks of twentieth-century industrialism and materialism. As a result, he later wrote in his *Memoirs*, he made plans for a novel that would "... carry these same people forward into the new American life, into the whirl and roar of modern machines". The result of this resolution was Anderson's third novel, *Poor White.*

Poor White is the first product of his efforts to go beyond the limitations inherent in the *Winesburg, Ohio* approach, to build on the lessons he had learned in writing it, and at the same time to carry his people forward into the new age of industrialism. In this respect it is a continuation of the story of Winesburg, in which

individual lives become lost in the face of the gigantic industrial forces let loose on the Midwestern countryside. As Anderson remarked in the introduction to the Modern Library edition of the novel, it was in that sense an autobiography of a town during its transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy. The people of the town gave it its life, but the unfeeling forces of industrialism gave it its direction.

Such a statement, however, must not be taken too literally because Anderson had learned in preparing for and writing *Winesburg, Ohio* that he could not ignore the individual, and the story is in fact not the biography of a town but the biography of people in the town whose lives have been warped by industrialism and its concomitant greed. In writing *Winesburg, Ohio* he had focused on individual lives, providing as a byproduct an intimate and detailed picture of American village life in the late nineteenth century; in *Poor White* he was to do the same thing in the tighter form of the conventional novel, focusing on fewer characters in more detail, but at the same time depicting what has happened to the town and its people during the period of change.

In seeking to go back in time to identify the origins of the American Midwestern experience as clearly as possible Anderson draws heavily on the work of another Midwesterner, Mark Twain, for whom he had a deep, intuitive sympathy, seeing him as a man who ". . . hears the whispering of the gods . because he was the half-savage, tender, god-worshiping believing boy. He had proud, conscious innocence." *Poor White* begins in Mark Twain's Mississippi River Valley, the microcosm of what Anderson had characterized in *Winesburg, Ohio* as the age of "brutal ignorance" combined with "childlike innocence". Out of this environment that produced Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, the symbol of that age of innocence, Anderson produced Hugh McVey, the protagonist of *Poor White*, who grew up in the image of Abraham Lincoln, to emerge, like Lincoln, an unwitting symbol of a new age.

McVey's father, like Huckleberry's, is a drunkard, a victim of failure in an age increasingly conscious of success, and in McVey's

early years in Mudcat Landing, Missouri, Anderson shows the first evidences of the loss of childhood innocence and the intensification of brutal ignorance. This is the point where *Winesburg, Ohio* leaves off; from here Anderson moves McVey rapidly and inevitably into the new era.

The coming of the railroad is the immediate symbol of the new age as well as the means whereby McVey enters it, but more important is the philosophy he learns through the wife of the stationmaster who employs him. Just as Huck Finn had been forced to become civilized by the Widow Douglas, Hugh was also, by the wife, but whereas Huck rebelled, Hugh was unable to, and he absorbed and accepted her New England philosophy that "'It's a sin to be so dreamy and worthless'." He was determined to succeed, to amount to something, to get ahead in the world.

Here Anderson touches upon a phenomenon noted by other Midwestern novelists: the impact on the area of the New England puritan concept that work and close attention to business affairs were the only acceptable Christian activities for a man. Louis Bromfield called this influence the concept of the peddler, a pragmatic materialistic philosophy that had much to do with the direction of thinking and action in the Midwest after the frontier had passed. Anderson, growing up as he did on the western edge of the Firelands Area of Connecticut's Western Reserve, had had the opportunity not only to learn the philosophy but to experience it in action.

In spite of his proclivity to dream, McVey persevered, became a skilled telegrapher, and in time came to Bidwell, Ohio, a town that is in effect Winesburg as it was when George Willard left it. Anderson sketches the spirit of the town, the time, and the area as it was:

> In all the towns of mid-western America it was a time of waiting. The country having been cleared and the Indians driven away . . ., the Civil War having been fought and won, and there being no great national problems that touched closely upon their lives, the minds of men were turned in upon themselves . . .
>
> In all the great Mississippi Valley each town came to

> have a character of its own . . . a kind of invisible roof beneath which every one lived spread itself over each town. Beneath the roof boys and girls were born, grew up, quarreled, fought, and formed friendships with their fellows, were introduced into the mysteries of love, married, and became the fathers and mothers of children, grew old, sickened, and died.
>
> Within this invisible circle and under the great roof every one knew his neighbor and was known to him. Strangers did not come and go swiftly and mysteriously and there was no constant and confusing roar of machinery and of new projects afoot. For the moment mankind seemed about to take time to try to understand itself.

Bidwell was, then, Winesburg as George Willard had seen it from the train, poised and waiting on the verge of entering into the new age. It was still a town of individuals and of groups, of craftsmen and of laborers, but a wise man of the town saw the change coming: " 'Well, there's going to be a new war here . . . It won't be like the Civil War, just shooting off guns and killing people's bodies. At first it's going to be a war between individuals to see to what class a man must belong; then it is going to be a long, silent war between classes, between those who have and those who can't get. It'll be the worst war of all'."

It was this war that Hugh McVey, the unconscious instrument of the age was to bring about. He became an inventor, his inventions were taken up by young men of affairs in the town, and in time Bidwell became an industrial center. Again Anderson attempts to recapture the atmosphere that made this transformation emerge from idealistic dream to realistic and materialistic fact:

> New talk ran through the town. A new force that was being born into American life and into life everywhere allover the world was feeding on the old dying individualistic life . . . It was meant to seal men together, to wipe out national lines, to walk under seas and fly through the air . . .

As the new industrialism, sparked by the inventive genius of Hugh McVey, came into being in the town the realities of greed, corruption, and cruelty replaced these ideals. McVey, the innocent creature of circumstance, rebelled, but it was too late, and the war prophesied by the old man came true: oppression and strikes be-

came the fruit that the town harvested instead of its earlier agricultural products, and McVey, like the earlier Anderson, could only turn his back on the industrial giant and seek meaning elsewhere.

This skeletal outline of the book's narrative structure indicates that Anderson has written the biography of a town, and in doing so he has drawn heavily on the experience that went into both *Windy McPherson's Son* and *Marching Men*. But, although Anderson's earlier protest against industrialism is still very much in evidence, this is not a sociological document nor is it mere protest. Rather, Anderson's concern here is with the impact of the new industrialism on the individual and the ensuing warping of character that produces technological grotesques more horrible than those he had depicted in *Winesburg, Ohio*. The work becomes, then, much more than the biography of a town; it becomes the vehicle for moving the people of Winesburg into an age that produces a more rigid isolation, a more horrible individualism, and a more demanding conformity than anything they had ever known before.

This, then, becomes the major theme of the book: the study of the impact of industrialism upon the human personality. The central figure, Hugh McVey, shows this impact most clearly and definitively, but its ramifications are evident throughout the book on every level of society ranging from the country squire turned entrepreneur to the farm boy turned millhand. The effects of industrialism are shown to be an intensified isolation, a confused and often meaningless sense of values, and an economic inhumaneness more pronounced and more deliberate in the economic jungle than it had ever been before.

In delineating Hugh McVey as the central character Anderson has not merely given his novel focus; rather, he has attempted to portray a character that would incorporate within himself the essence of the American myth as it has been taken over by industrialism. As executed, McVey is another Edison, a man capable of seeing through to the heart of a practical problem and taking practical steps to solve it, in the process making human life a bit

easier and more convenient to live. However, Anderson embodies in the character of this Edison-like figure an insight and a sense of human worth that a practical man rarely has time for, and the resulting combination produces a figure who occupies a position in the industrial realm parallel to that of Abraham Lincoln in the realm of politics.

The resemblance of Hugh McVey to Lincoln is not merely accident, however. Rather, Anderson has constructed it carefully, utilizing physical awkwardness, a dreamy nature, and a strain of practicality as well as a deep sense of compassion to produce a man capable of embodying the various American myths and giving them focus, as had Lincoln.

Anderson has done this because he has seen the parallel between the struggle of whi:h Lincoln became the focal point and that which he intends to symbolize by McVey. The Lincolnian struggle was an effort to attain political freedom that in time, it was hoped, would result in spiritual freedom and the ultimate ennobling of man, and this struggle Anderson saw as a forerunner of the fight for economic freedom that he hoped would ultimately have the same end.

Like Lincoln, McVey's origins are humble and obscure, firmly rooted in the frontier traditions of freedom and individualism. At the same time each feels a compassion for his fellow man that transcends the ruggedness of frontier individualism and makes him, in effect, his brother's keeper rather than his competitor. Each man has a personality made up of a combination of dreamy idealism and practical dedication, the latter both threatened and modified by the former so that a stormy balance is struck. Taciturn and unpretentious, each has pursued a course of meeting the problem of liberation head on, seeking an idealistic solution in a practical, direct way, and each sees the goal of physical liberation within reach and the final spiritual liberation on the horizon.

In carrying on the struggle, however, each has become an unwitting tool both of men whose motives are less noble than their own and, more importantly, of forces of their respective ages. Although each has unleashed the forces, he can no longer control

or direct them to desirable ends, and neither physical nor spiritual liberation materializes. Lincoln's death left the forces unleashed, resulting in the chaos of Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, but Anderson lets McVey live, and his final realization of what he and industrialism had done and his resolution to find a cure for the resulting evils through an increased awareness of human values leave hope for the future.

The parallel between Lincoln and McVey is carried through in the area of human relations. Lincoln is the classic isolated figure in American history. Tall, silent, and mysterious, he has given rise to an entire body of American folklore that shows him constantly reaching out to others, pardoning sleeping sentries and bewildered deserters, taking time to write letters of condolence to poor widows, attempting to establish a common ground with an unsympathetic wife; and in McVey Anderson portrays the same characteristics in essence if not in fact. Again, Lincoln's death left his isolation unresolved so that myth-makers may make of it what they will. But McVey lives, and in the final pages of the book Anderson indicates that McVey's reaching out is beginning to show results, that the first, most intimate gap has been bridged.

Anderson provides no blueprint for carrying this out, however. His means had already been proposed in *Winesburg, Ohio:* to ignore the conventional and superficial interpretations of human acts and relationships and to probe intuitively and compassionately beneath them for common understanding as man and man rather than man and woman, doctor and patient, teacher and pupil, or any of the other conventional dichotomies.

The impact of industrialism upon Hugh has been to delude him into confusing means with ends and to make of him a well-paid but unthinking servant. He was saved, however, by his innate sense of honesty that made him revolt at the obvious theft of another's patents and by the influence of his wife, the daughter of the richest man in Bidwell. Prior to her marriage she had maintained an active rebellion against the forces of convention that attempted to make her a grotesque, and she maintains that attitude toward industrialism and materialism. She represents in

the novel the free spirit who refuses to let herself become imprisoned and distorted by outside pressures of any kind, and in spite of the misunderstandings she encounters she maintains her personal integrity and tries to expand it through intimacy with others. It is this lesson that McVey eventually learns from her as he begins his search for fulfilment through understanding and loving others rather than through the invention and accumulation of things.

On lower levels the impact of industrialism is both immediate and brutal. In some of the best and most intimate sections of the book, strongly reminiscent of the moments of insight in *Winesburg, Ohio,* Anderson shows the farmhand who comes to the factory to save himself from the isolated drudgery of the farm, only to find a more intense isolation and more demanding and degrading job in the shops; he portrays the bewilderment of the little people of the town, especially of Joe Wainsworth, the harness-maker, whose craft has been superseded by the machines; he shows the degeneration of human values into materialistic values as the townspeople seek fulfillment in selling out to the new age.

The struggle in the novel, then, is actually that of attempting to find and retain human values in the face of a defiant, whistling, screeching industrialism, just as it had been in Anderson's earlier novels. But *Poor White* is a much more analytical approach to the same problem. Industrialism itself is no longer the villian, the source of all human spiritual ills, as the earlier novels maintained. Rather, it merely provides the opportunity for an intensification of the same inhumanity, the same individualism run wild, that had distorted the people of Winesburg and all people since men began to live in groups and to adopt standards of appearance rather than intrinsic value as measures of worth. Industrialism is potentially a source of much good, as Anderson points out; it becomes evil when it is controlled by materialistic values rather than human values. In the long range view, however, he has hope that man may acquire the proper sense of values, as Hugh McVey indicates, but in the meanwhile life for the little people is destined to be a series of private, personal tragedies of farmhands, harness

makers, and others who have found their lot to be exploitative.

In the novel Anderson has furthered his attempt to understand the Midwestern experience of his time by fusing the first major theme with which he dealt in *Windy McPherson's Son* and *Marching Men,* the impact of industrialism on the individual, with the second, the problems of human isolation as in *Winesburg, Ohio.* Both appeared in *Windy McPherson's Son,* but they were parallel stories because Anderson's anger at materialism prevented him from seeing that the former is merely a manifestation of the latter, and both appeared but remained unjoined because Anderson was misled by his search for a cure. *Winesburg, Ohio,* following tentative explorations in *Mid-American Chants,* brought him to the realization that human isolation resulted from the confusion of appearance with reality, and here in *Poor White* he has finally learned that the giant industrialism is neuter, that it takes on meaning only from the human elements that control it; thus the problem resolves itself to the ultimate one of attaining the intuitive perception of human worth that he had sought among the people of Winesburg and placing that value rather than the superficial value of appearance in the controlling position in the new age. Hugh McVey, in the end, is marking out this path; as Anderson comments, "The poor white . . . who had forced himself in advance of his fellows along the road of mechanical development, was still in advance of his fellows of the growing Ohio towns. The struggle he was making was the struggle his fellows of another generation would . . . have to make." This is the problem that Anderson was to return to, after a good deal of doubting, searching, and questioning, at the end of his career.

As a novel, *Poor White* is a complex and important work, chronicling as it does the rapid transition of the American town from an agricultural to an industrial economy, but it is not a perfect work. Problems of structure remain to mar it as they had the earlier novels, although the artificiality of style, diction, and conversation of the earlier novels has been replaced by the natural idioms and rhythms of *Winesburg, Ohio.* Digressions that seem to belong in the shorter pieces become barriers that prevent the easy

flow of narrative in the novel form as in the long section devoted to Clara Butterworth. More important than this, however, is the fact that Anderson had not yet learned to end a novel. Indecision is acceptable at the end of one of his sketches or stories; it is accepted as part of life rather than life itself, but in a novel the same sort of ending results in dissatisfaction.

These shortcomings are strengths in the shorter forms when combined with Anderson's ability to penetrate to the essence of character; in the novels they tend to point out Anderson's major ability as a writer: his propensity and ability to tell only part of a larger story. In the short forms, the reader feels, therefore, that he has been permitted to glimpse beneath the mysterious surface of life; in the novels he has had more than a glimpse but he is still no closer to the ultimate meaning of life than he had been before. The result of such indecisiveness is further documentation of the thesis that consciously or unconsciously, Anderson is making each of his works a part of the panorama of Midwestern experience that all of them combine to make. Nevertheless, the individual novels leave the reader unsatisfied. In *Poor White* the individual sketches of the little people of the town remain vivid, but the demands of the novel form limit his ability by forcing him to straight exposition, and his particular gifts suffer as a result.

On the whole, however, *Poor White* is a major achievement. Marking as it does Anderson's first attempt to fuse and interpret the apparently diverse themes with which he had been concerned, it is the first novel of his artistic maturity, and with *Kit Brandon* it remains one of his best. Furthermore, it is clear indication that Anderson's concern is not with the naturalistic or the realistic in human life and affairs, as critics who reviewed the book maintained, but with the humanistic values that make life livable.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DAVID D. ANDERSON, who worked at the University of Karachi during 1963-64 as a Fulbright lecturer in American Literature is a writer with growing reputation in the field of modern American novel. Born in Lorain, Ohio, he received his M.A. in English from Bowling Green State University in 1952. He did his doctoral work in the field of English Literature at Michigan State University and was awarded the Ph.D. degree in 1960.

His acquaintanceship with well known novelist, Louis Bromfield in the years following World War II resulted in his recent book, LOUIS BROMFIELD which has been published under Twayne's United States Authors Series by Twayne Publishers, New York. Dr. Anderson is also author of the book, SHERWOOD ANDERSON, for which he was awarded Book Manuscript Award in 1961.

Dr. Anderson has published a variety of critical articles and short stories in *The Personalist, The Midwest Quarterly, Michigan History, Artesian, Stylus, The Lincoln Herald, Midwest Folklore, The Mark Twain Journal*, and other periodicals in America and Pakistan. His book—a detailed critical study of Sherwood Anderson—will be published soon, and he is at work on a novel and a critical anthology of American literature. At present he is assistant professor of American Thought and Language at Michigan State University.

Price: Rs. 8.60